



The University of Fiji | UniPulse | ISSUE 2 2021

## UniFiji Classes Go Face-to-Face-Online

The University of Fiji resumed all classes through the face-to-face online mode on April 26, 2020 after its mid-semester break.

Acting Vice Chancellor of the University of Fiji, Professor Shaista Shameem said the University was able to transit to a virtual campus quite easily.

Professor Shameem said that The University of Fiji Council had the foresight in 2020 and Semester 1, 2021 to direct academic staff to continue with the 2/3 virtual learning methodology and in the latest crisis this was easily moved to 100% virtual classrooms until the situation improves.

Executive Director Finance Planning and Development, Mr Ravineet Sami said that operations remained normal despite the lockdown.

“All staff are well connected from home to provide student learning and teaching support and at the same time all services to the stakeholders are intact. Relevant staff in support services have been given connectivity access through the University server to process everything online such as payroll processing for staff, receipt generation, invoice generation, student registration, online processing of student refunds, online payments for vendors, online procurement and report generation,” he said.

Mr Sami explained that Security Services have been well-briefed regarding covid-19 safety plan and any staff entering the Campuses should have the CareFiji app connected through Bluetooth, must have a mask and mandatorily to go through temperature checks. Entry for staff was allowed only for accessing any teaching material from their offices for the students, and entry was approved only by the Executive Director Finance, Planning and Development.

The Office of the Registrar sent out a survey form of “all Devices and Internet Connectivity” to all students on 24 April 2021. The survey was conducted to ensure that all students are able to continue with their learning during period of lockdown and/or restricted movement.

Eighty-five per cent of the students noted that they were connected with internet at their residence or office in the survey.

“The feedback from the student shows that the University's preparedness in terms of teaching online and engagement with the students has been effective,” said Registrar, Ms Karishma Mani.

President of the UniFiji Students' Association, Ratu Sailosi Dawai, said that some of the students had adapted well to the online teaching mode, but other who also had challenges.

“There are some who are facing difficulties accessing the classes online because they don't have gadgets, and internet shop in localities are closed including the IT labs that are provided by the university across the country since last year,” he said.

Ratu Sailosi explained that students who were facing problems had contacted their lecturers personally and there are custom-made arrangements with respect to their assessments and classes.

The University is well positioned to offer totally online courses in Semester 2, in light of the rising number of Covid-19 cases in Fiji.

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# Editorial

Due to the University moving into full time virtual mode from April this year, many of our proposed plans had to be deferred. We remain in full virtual mode with respect to learning, teaching, research and administration in Semester 2 which began on July 26th with an orientation for students on the two main e-learning platforms now used by the University, TopHat and Beyond Labz. TopHat is an interactive learning/teaching platform which measures students' attendance and participation as well as provides us with the ability to review the quality of teaching of University courses. Beyond Labz is a superior laboratory platform for science and science-based courses as it provides students and teaching staff with an interactive laboratory experience surpassing even our physical labs which were limited due to space and resources. Licenses for both platforms were purchased as an investment in education by the University to facilitate the best learning outcomes for students notwithstanding the current restrictions on face to face lectures.

Despite the lockdown and containment in accordance with Ministry of Health restrictions the University has forged ahead with some notable achievements since Semester 1. These are (i) applying for international accreditation of all its programmes; (ii) being successful in a School of Science and Technology (SoST) community project application for a USAID grant of US\$350,000; (iii) being successful in an application for a grant of US\$155,000 to develop a Student Management System; (iv) being successful in an application for a UK Economic and Social Research Council grant of F\$30,000 for a student-centred conservation of knowledge project in partnership with USP and FNU students- the University of Fiji's project is called: "Our Drua Voyage: Coastal Conservation Through Traditional Knowledge. The University of Fiji Attitude on the Environment"; (v) A zoom Career Teachers' Workshop; (vi) our first ever careers skills training for students; (vii) a partnership with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement for women in leadership training in September; (viii) regional engagement for a nursing programme with the Nauruan Government; and (ix) a partnership with the Fiji College of General Practitioners for mentoring and observation at GP clinics in the western division for Year 6 UPSM medical students in order to provide them with some relevant experiences.

The challenges faced by the University are similarly faced by all other institutions during Covid-19. One of the more pressing challenges is lack of ongoing community connection due to isolation from each other. For that reason the Vox Populi: The University of Fiji Intranet Radio was established by the University to keep the community together. While originally confined to staff and students of the University, The Vox is now popular with supporters and partners outside the University as well. It has single-handedly restored a sense of well-being and collegiality among staff and students. The Vox will also provide training for those interested in becoming radio jockeys or anchors of the future.

The University has no option but to do what it can, even with very limited resources, and in accordance with its mandate, to provide the best higher education we can afford in the years ahead. In that respect we have also developed a strong supportive network, particularly over the TSLB Review process, with other higher education institutions in Fiji (HEIs).

I warmly congratulate both staff and students of the University of Fiji for being able to rise above the difficulties and challenges of our times not only within the University but also across Fiji as whole. It is our UniFiji community that has helped us hold everything and everyone together in higher education during such unprecedented times of hardship and strain.

Professor Shaista Shameem *FRSA*  
Acting Vice Chancellor

## Our Chess Players Can Mix It Well With The Best in the World

The Acting Vice-Chancellor of The University of Fiji, Professor Shaista Shameem has lauded the achievements of the University's representatives to the recent first-ever World Universities Online Chess Championship (WUOCC) hosted by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

Professor Shameem said it was a great achievement by the students and their coaches.

"This is excellent work by our Chess Club making huge efforts on our behalf," she said.

The team, consisting of seven medical students of the Umanand Prasad School of Medicine and Health Sciences, was placed 113 out of the 202 competing universities in the Blitz events, and tied with four other universities for 73rd to 76th place out of the 190 competing in the Rapid events.

Coach and co-organizer of The University of Fiji Chess Club, Dr Ricardo Corpuz commended the students and thanked the University for its support.

"As first-time international competitors, we did good," said Dr Corpuz, "but we are continuously practicing online to improve our skills.

The team was matched up against internationally rated Grand Masters and Candidate Masters, but Dr Corpuz was optimistic of the team's chances when it competes in the next championships.

"In the end," he said, 'even if we did not qualify for the finals we still gave our best and showed the other countries that Fiji and The University of Fiji Chess Team is a team to beat the next time."

# Higher Education Roundtable



The Management and Staff of the University with the participants after the Roundtable discussions.

The University held a Roundtable Discussion on January 15, 2021, focusing on human resource needs in Fiji in the next decade.

Representatives from the public and private sectors, the media, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, religious organisations, and other opinion-shapers attended the meeting.

Different approaches to agricultural studies were discussed in light of Fiji's vulnerability to natural disasters and pandemics. The current pandemic also required the need for the Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Board (TSLB) to re-evaluate funding for MBBS studies, given the need for more doctors.

Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Shaista Shameem said many students and parents had lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic. "That is why we wanted to give the opportunity to community groups to tell us and therefore we tell the TSLB to examine exactly where the economic growth will be in the future and where Government should be putting money so that we can educate students for them to get a good livelihood in the future," she said.

A major topic of discussion also was the need for tertiary institutions to offer inter-disciplinary studies.

The Roundtable meeting was initiated by the University after a request from the TSLB that higher education institutions assist in a review of human resource needs for the private and public sector in the next 10 years. The Roundtable meeting also identified skills shortages in various sectors of the economy; emerging areas in the labor market, and the review of budgetary allocations to ensure that an adequate level of funding was available and invested where skills were needed.

The discussions were compiled and a report was later submitted to the TSLB.

## Inter-Tertiary Moot Competition Launched on International Women's Day at The University of Fiji

The then Minister of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, the Hon. Mereseini Vuniwaqa launched the Inter-Tertiary Moot Competition at the Saweni Campus of the University to mark the UN International Women's Day on Monday March 8th.

While addressing the hundreds of students and staff gathered to witness the moot competition, she said advancing gender equality required a changing in mindset, and this could be achieved through advocacy, awareness programs, legal reform, settling legal issues through court cases and restructuring out-of-date social, economic and legal systems and mechanisms.

"The law is a key contributor to the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. And as aspiring lawyers I am hopeful that some of you will hold gender equality issues as the mainstay of your legal careers," she said.



Honourable Mereseini Vuniwaqa with UFSA President Ratu Sailosi Dawai during the launch.

The Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Shaista Shameem said that the leaders of the community and religious leaders as well as every single member of society has the responsibility to eradicate domestic violence.

"The USP mooters said in their submissions that 49% of all crimes in Fiji are sexual offences. That is a shocking statistic," said Professor Shameem. "But it is not just the courts, the Parliament or even the Ministry of Women that is responsible for fixing that problem. No single individual is responsible for getting rid of such evil from our society and all of us are in it together. We all need to make sure that we eradicate this problem of gender violence in society."

UniFiji Student Association President, Ratu Sailosi Dawai stated that the University's Strategic Plan 2017-2021 promoted academic freedom and fostered UniFiji's role as a critic and conscience of society.

"In trying to keep track of being the conscience of society, we have identified that gender issues are not eroding, but rather, are continuously increasing. What everyone saw today is a discussion on the topic from the point of law. Law students presented arguments on how law can advance this battle," he said.

The Moot Competition continued for several weeks but had to be suspended due the Covid-19 restrictions.

## Education for Economic Growth: Remodelling Fiji's National Development Plan post Covid-19

Archbishop Peter Loy Chong in discussions with other participants



Superintendent Pita Keni was one of the interested participants at the Roundtable Conference

The University of Fiji held its second Roundtable on the topic of **“Education for Economic Growth: Remodelling Fiji's National Development Plan post-Covid 19”** at the Saweni Campus and also by zoom connection on Friday February 26<sup>th</sup>.

Attending the 1-day Roundtable were organisations and individuals who have a stake in education and Fiji's economic development. They included representatives from several religious organisations, town and city councils, educators, the sugar industry, police, livestock and agricultural producers, unions, women's organisations, the Judiciary, UNDP as well as opinion shapers and influencers. The Acting Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Shaista Shameem, said the participants at the conclusion of the Roundtable drafted 10 Resolutions as follows:

**The National Development Plan of Fiji to be revised with the following Principles:**

1. Promote people- and earth-centred efficient production and development instead of production solely for market-driven monetary value;
2. Emphasise the importance of human rights and values in education and investment proposals as opposed to market demand.
3. Ensure the importance of a holistic and comprehensive education at all stages of sustainable national economic development.
4. Promote an innovative education curriculum that adapts technologies for local situations and practices.
5. Pursue new markets for local produce and products.
6. Facilitate innovative and diversified agricultural practices and products.
7. Invest in education, health and welfare for social protection.
8. Government to regulate all investment in Fiji in favour of constitutional provisions on protection of the environment and the local population.
9. Form a nexus amongst Government, higher educational institutions and economic stakeholders for generation, assimilation, and dissemination of knowledge and skills for effective, holistic and sustainable national development.
10. Redefine Fiji's place in the world as a leader in forward-looking development strategies.

Professor Shameem said the resolutions point to an alternative economic development paradigm premised on sustainable new industries, education to facilitate investments by local producers and for local consumption as well as to diversify export in niche areas, especially in medicinal herbal products for example medicinal cannabinoids, and in spices and coffee, as well as other niche areas in demand in the world post Covid-19 reality.

Participants concluded that it was apparent from the Reserve Bank economic forecast and the concerns of key NGOs that the people of Fiji faced dire economic consequences, not only due to Covid-19, but also because of the resultant global downturn.

They also agreed that Fiji's growing debt could be mitigated by concentration on alternative agricultural products that were in demand internationally such as medicinal herbs, coffee and spices.

“For example”, Professor Shameem said, “coffee was a high-end product that could be grown sustainably in Fiji and was considered now to be second to oil in the international demand market. The Roundtable participants were concerned about monoculture products that depleted the soil and the environment. They wanted to consider education for a different type of economic focus for the nation.”

Roundtable participants decided that education, appropriately and adequately funded, would lead to economic growth for all the people of Fiji and earn surplus for the Government as well.

“The participants insisted that there should be more funds allocated to the social protection areas of education, health and welfare”, said Professor Shameem. “In particular, well-funded and appropriate education from the cradle to the grave would lead to economic growth with new sustainable industries and products being emphasised for Fiji.”

The Roundtable concluded that the 20- and 5-year National Development Plan of Fiji and the Education Strategic Plan needed to be revised with proper consultation to enable the nation to get past its economic problems caused not only by Covid-19 but other factors.

# Counselling on Social Media – A Students’ Association Initiative

The UniFiji Students’ Association has embarked on a new initiative to support students during the lockdowns – mass counseling on social media platforms.

Ratu Sailosi Dawai, President, UFSA said mental health was critical in any academic setting.

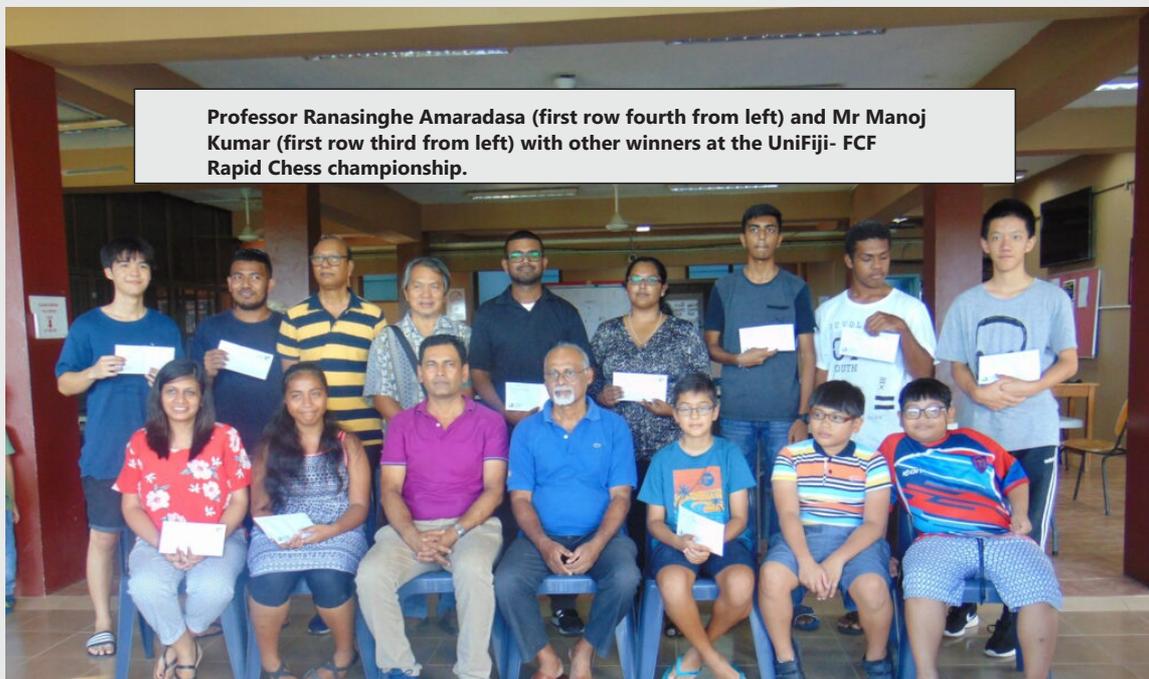
“As we try to adapt to this new norm, we need encouragement and tips on how to get through it smoothly. We understand that studying in isolation is tough for almost everyone. We face challenges daily and sometimes we think of throwing the towel which is what we do not want to happen,” he said.

Ratu Sailosi said that with the help of the University Counsellor, Mr Jone Veisamasama, they are striving to support students during these difficult times, by fostering a culture of group discussions via social media platforms.

“Before lockdown, students could freely sit together and discuss their schoolwork and recap on their studies. Currently, we are running this virtually through many social media platforms ranging from viber, messenger, whatsapp to google meet and zoom. It is operated by students themselves,” he explained.

Several workshops and seminars have been run online such as Curriculum Vitae Training, Mental Health seminar and discussions about Fiji's economy post covid-19, have boosted student engagement at the University, even while they are physically away from the Campuses.

## UniFiji-Fiji Chess Federation Rapid Chess Championship



Professor Ranasinghe Amaradasa (first row fourth from left) and Mr Manoj Kumar (first row third from left) with other winners at the UniFiji- FCF Rapid Chess championship.

The UniFiji-Fiji Chess Federation Rapid Chess Championship was held in mid-April at the Saweni Campus.

Thirty-six players participated in four categories: Open, Women, Secondary and Primary categories.

Dr. Ricardo Corpuz, Co-Chair of the UniFiji Chess Committee said that the tournament was a success.

“With the turnout of most students from primary and secondary school this will make chess one of the sports in Fiji for all ages to compete in,” he said.

National Arbiter William Bennion said that Fiji Chess Federation was pleased to see new players coming to participate in tournaments organized at Saweni Campus.

“The FCF would like to extend its heartfelt thanks toward The University of Fiji for helping foster the sport of Chess in the Western Division. We would also like to congratulate the UniFiji Chess team and their official, Dr. Ricardo Corpuz on their participation in the First World University Online Chess Championship. They not only represented UniFiji but Fiji as a whole,” he said.

Certificates were also given to the World Online University Chess Championship participants.

The tournament saw participation from Candidate Masters Manoj Kumar and Noel Adricula; Swami Vivekananda College fielded 9 players. The tournament saw seven women fighting for the top prize in the Women's Category.

Candidate Master Manoj Kumar won the much-contested Open Category, Nikai Ruria, a Swami Vivekananda College student, bagged the first prize in the Women's Category and was awarded the Best Beginners prize. Nisheel Chandra won the Secondary category while Paul Corpuz won the Primary Category.

# UniFiji's Tourism Studies Programme Endorsed

The University of Fiji's Bachelor of Commerce in Tourism Studies was recently endorsed by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA). The Chief Executive Officer for PATA, Dr. Mario Hardy in his endorsement letter said "PATA recognises the importance of investing in education and endorsing the University of Fiji's programme is well in line with our commitment to Human Capital Development. It pleases me to see the development of such an interdisciplinary programme that focuses on sustainability."

Dr. Navneel Prasad, Head of the Management Department at the University was thankful to PATA for the endorsement, highlighting that it was the first regional endorsement for the programme.

"This signifies the quality and standard of the Tourism Studies programme and aligns with the strategic direction of the university to achieve regional and international endorsements and accreditation," he said.

Dr. Prasad noted that for Tourism Studies students, this endorsement indicated the unparalleled standard of the programme that the University offered as well as opportunities such as scholarships, sponsorship, mentorship, network-building, participation in workshops and speaking opportunities at PATA Events.

"This endorsement is also timely in the sense that it will add confidence for current and prospective students of Tourism as a field of study which was otherwise dampened by the impact of Covid-19 on the industry," he said.

The Bachelor of Commerce in Tourism Studies programme kicked off in January 2020 with its first cohort of students. Students who have passed their Year 13 Examination or equivalent with 200 marks and a minimum of 50% in English are eligible to apply for the programme.



## About PATA

Founded in 1951, PATA a not-for-profit membership association that acts as a catalyst for the responsible development of travel and tourism to, from and within the Asia Pacific region. Founded in 1951, the Association provides aligned advocacy, insightful research and innovative events to its more than 800 member organisations, including 95 government, state and city tourism bodies, 20 international airlines and airports, 102 hospitality organisations and 70 educational institutions, as well as over 4,000 young tourism professional (YTP) members across the world.

## Launch of the Intranet Radio Station, "The Vox"



The University of Fiji launched its intranet radio station called "The Vox" on May 21, 2021 in the virtual mode. "The Vox" airs from 6 pm to midnight every day of the week. It is currently accessible only to staff and students of the University through the University website. Programmes include information for staff and students and music as well as other items designed to restore the work/study/life balance to the University of Fiji Community.

Acting Vice Chancellor, Professor Shaista Shameem said she had noticed during lockdown and containment that it was not enough to only provide virtual classrooms for teaching and learning even though the University had moved quite smoothly into virtual platforms since 2020.

"Isolation and loneliness faced by the University of Fiji Staff and Students due to lack of social contact with colleagues and friends hindered effective learning and collegiality, she said. "Mental as well as physical health have been important parts of the University's concern for our community. We know that our students suffer from having to stay at home and study without any social contact with their friends or their lecturers."

A University Committee was established to see how students could be provided with rest and relaxation in broadcast form. The Vox Project was the result of the Committee's deliberations.

Professor Shameem said that the Vox would provide broader education, information, relevant news and activities such as quiz shows and interviews with famous people to the listeners. A proposed programme is Desert Island Discs where well-known personalities in Fiji will be asked to bring along their favourite music and be interviewed at the same time.

She said that the name "the Vox" for the broadcast service was derived from "Vox Populi" or "the voice of the people". The "people" were the University of Fiji community and the radio station would respond to their needs, aspirations, music requests and broad education as well as provide information and notices.

The University appointed experienced radio DJ Lawrence Singh, who is also a student in the JDP School of Law, as The Vox Station Manager. Professor Shameem said the Vox also planned to run short training courses for people who wanted to work as radio DJs in the future. She said the University was grateful to the Fiji Performing Arts Association (FPRA) for guiding them through the project, in particular Fiji's own Ms Laisa Vulakoro a director of FPRA.

# JDP School of Law Initiates Virtual Placements For its Legal Practitioner Programme

The University of Fiji's Justice Devendra Pathik School of Law this semester initiated virtual placements to allow its law students to complete their professional placement module virtually with designated law firms and organisations in Fiji.

The School of Law's Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (GDLP) programme is normally undertaken over a period of six months' post LLB degree with the final month being a 'Placement Module' where students are placed in law firms and organisations in order to obtain practical hands-on experience so that they are work-ready at the end of the Programme and admitted to the Bar.

However, this year, with restrictions due to Covid-19 from April, the Acting Chairperson of the Board of Legal Education (BLE), the Solicitor General, informed law schools in Fiji that the professional practice placement requirement had been waived by the Board.

Acting Vice Chancellor and Dean of the JDP School of Law, Professor Shaista Shameem said that this decision by the BLE without any consultation with all the law schools was most unfortunate.

"Had we been consulted, we would have advised BLE that there were alternatives to physical placement in law firms for this module. The University of Fiji was already learning and teaching in virtual real time modes from 2020 when the virus first arrived in the country. The University had reached the required number of credit points in virtual modes without compromising the learning standards of the Fiji Higher Education Commission," she said.

Professor Shameem said that the GDLP students' placement also waived last year had adverse effects on law graduates seeking to gain experience that would be useful to them as practitioners.

The University realised that this had not benefitted the legal fraternity nor the qualifications of their students.

"Had the Board of Legal Education consulted on placements the University of Fiji would have expressed a firm view," said Professor Shameem.

Despite the BLE waiver, the School of Law has asked its partner law firms to assist with managing placements in a virtual mode. "We have been amazed and very grateful to many law firms and legal organisations for stepping up and happily agreeing to supervise our GDLP students in virtual mode," she said.

She said she did not want the students of the JDP School of Law to waste their time during what would be the final month of their GDLP Programme. The offer by law firms and organisations meant that the students would be engaged with the practice of law albeit in virtual mode.

"The virtual legal mode is fast becoming a common methodology; virtual court cases and hearings are held frequently by judges and tribunals the world over to ensure that justice is delivered speedily despite the pandemic and Fiji should be no exception" she said.

Professor Shameem said the University prided itself on being 'future ready' and there was no better example than virtual learning in legal practice despite the constraints the pandemic had placed on education internationally.

At the end of the Virtual Placement Module, University of Fiji law students who successfully pass will be issued with a Certificate of Competence by the University, alongside their formal GDLP Certificates.

The law firms which have offered to supervise the students in virtual placement mode are Shekinah Law and Marsh Law of Suva, Reddy Law of Lautoka, Stallion Attorneys in Sigatoka, Vama Law and Capital Legal.

The Fiji Women in Maritime Association and the Fiji Council of Social Services are also supervising students in virtual placement. Each student and supervising partner will communicate entirely through Google Meet, Zoom, Viber, Messenger, Twitter, Emails or any other means of communication available to both parties. The engagement hours were determined by the supervisor and closely monitored by the JDP School of Law.

The virtual placement module was undertaken under strict conditions for both the School of Law and the legal organisations.

GDLP Programme Coordinator Ms Koila Kabu said, "All our students are aware of their ethical obligation to maintain the confidentiality of any information they receive during the placement as with physical placement. We have no expectation of any remuneration or reward, beyond the unmatched experience of gaining first-hand knowledge and the personal thrill of working in an actual law firm or on legal issues."

"Our students are also required to conduct themselves with respect and dignity in compliance with the rules, regulations, and conventions of the organization they will be attached to."

Ms Kabu said that the School of Law had structured the Virtual Programme to emphasize "earning by doing", and has been versatile enough to do this virtually.

"Digital literacy has been one of our strengths at the University where we aim to make our students future ready," she said. "The students are competent in engaging with senior law practitioners and organization heads, and the close proximity bridged between student and supervisor, will guarantee a rich and meaningful learning process for our students."

Most of the GDLP students have successfully gained placements. They are expected to be allocated tasks such as drafting legal documents, reviewing of policies and procedures, briefs of regulations or legislation on human rights, climate change and gender issues in law.

"This arrangement is the closest resemblance as possible to working in a legal environment through online platforms," said Ms Kabu, "and our online library services are efficient and reliable for access by our students to research materials. This is a plus, and is an innovation we are looking forward to with great excitement."

# Vaccination at Saweni Campus

Thousands of people living in Saweni and nearby communities were vaccinated after The University opened its hall to the Ministry of Health as a Vaccination Centre from Wednesday June 2 to Friday June 4.

"The University fully supports the Ministry of Health's call that as many people as possible in Fiji should be vaccinated so that we can return to our normal lives very soon," said Acting Vice Chancellor, Professor Shaista Shameem. "The University was duty bound to ensure that it would provide its facilities towards this end."

The Ministry of Health has ensured that staff and students of the University who wish to be vaccinated were also included in the list of people who are being registered and vaccinated at Saweni Campus.

Professor Shameem said that the University community was gladly taking the opportunity to be vaccinated at Saweni Campus.



## Online Stress Management Session

The University held an Online Stress Management Session titled "Let's deal with stress" on May 21, 2021.

Mrs Mercy Gogoi of Umanand Prasad School of Medicine and Health Sciences during the session explained what stress is, what were the different types of stress and why some amount of stress is important for our growth and development.

She also discussed the common stressors and symptoms of stress, how different individuals with different personalities deal with stress and why a situation which is stressful for someone is manageable and not so stressful for someone is emphasising on the personality difference.

"The important part in this seminar was the stress management strategy where some very effective techniques were discussed to manage stress such as the change in lifestyle, focusing on the morning rituals and what we need to avoid to do first thing in the morning which depicts our mental energy, the importance of let go and many more effective techniques," she said.

Mrs Gogoi said that during this pandemic, the majority of the students were dealing with stress due to the sudden change in their lifestyle, adjustment to a new situation which were major stressors.

"Some students might be dealing with severe stress where they are not able to cope up and feeling miserable and hopeless which in psychology we call distress. Prolonged suffering from negative stress can lead to major mental health issues such as depression, developing suicidal ideation, self harming behaviour, even suicide attempt. This seminar showed some effective ways to deal with stress and was extremely beneficial for the students who were looking for some support and help to deal with it," she concluded.

## CV Writing Workshop

The Office of the Registrar presented a great opportunity to students to support their career preparation skills. The CV Writing and Interviewing Skills Online Workshop was held on 14 May 2021 and was conducted by International Leadership and Management Trainer and Self Excellence personal Coach, Mayur Suvarna Vivek Kalbag.

The topics covered at the workshop included Basic CV Writing skills, Importance and relevance of job interviews, three ways of making impact at interviews, Recognizing and dealing with specific barriers, How to plan and prepare before an Interview, Recognizing and developing presentation skills and Dealing with failures.

Shaina Shafina Dean, one of the participants of the workshop, said that the workshop was effective in terms of techniques of writing proper CVs and the importance and relevance of job interviews.

"I learnt things such as the two main types of CV: An onological (traditional) CV and a skills-based (or functional) CV and how they are structured. Since informational interviewing dos and don'ts are similar to those of other interviewing techniques, so therefore it is important to make sure that you do a little bit of research on the company that they work for," she said.

Priscilla Raniga, another participant said that she learnt to communicate knowledge correctly keeping in mind volume, audability and clarity.

"It gave me a new perspective and added positively on how I should approach my next job application and interview. They say a different perspective is good, it opens the door to more possibilities," she said.

The online workshop was attended by 15 participants.

# Fiji's Economic Tragedy: Better Options 10 years beyond Covid-19 Era Workshop

The University held a “Fiji's Economic Tragedy: Better Options 10 years beyond Covid-19 Era” Workshop, on June 1, 2021.

The workshop presented by Dr Sunil Kumar of the School of Business and Economics, highlighted the negative GDP growth that Fiji had faced in 2021.

“The economy contracted 20% last year and it is my prediction that the economy will continue to contract by another 6-7%,” he said.

He said that if Fiji's tourism sector does not pick up soon, the Fijian economy was doomed for a long overhaul.

“In my calculation the economy declined by 22% in 2020 and it could decline by around 7% in 2021 if tourism does not pick up. So roughly, the economy would have contracted about 30% in 24 months from December 2019.”

Dr Kumar presented several statistics on Fiji's economic performance and poverty conditions in Fiji in comparison to Mauritius.

He further elaborated that capabilities of SMEs in managing their operations should be enhanced.

“These include the quality of human resources and knowledge of modern management techniques. Adoption of productivity tools, technologies, and standards should be promoted. Basic productivity techniques, such as housekeeping and waste management; technologies that are appropriate for SME operations, and standards to improve quality and meet compliance requirements can all make a big difference to the productivity of SMEs,” he said.

Conclusively he said that agriculture needed to be developed, positive competition needed to be generated, human resources needed a big boost, and the health sector needed new initiative for post Covid-19 development. UniFiji, Dr Kumar concluded, could play a vital role in this.

## UniFiji took part in WHO Film Festival

The University of Fiji recently participated in a World Health Organization Film Festival that ended in January this year.

Titled “Health for All”, the Festival dwelt on themes like Universal Health Coverage (mental health and non-communicable diseases), Health Emergencies (Covid-19, Ebola, disaster relief and health in war zones) and Better Health and Well-Being (nutrition, sanitation, pollution and health education).

Participants had submitted short documentaries or fiction films of three to eight minutes in duration; short videos specifically crafted for social media; or animation films of one to five minutes' duration for all the categories.

A team from the Umanand Prasad School of Medicine and Health Sciences submitted five videos for the festival.

The first was about the lockdown in 2020 and entailed views from several non-Fiji resident students in form of interviews. The second

video “Na Cola Mai Navala” was about a life of an herbalist in his village Navala showing his life and changes through the years. The third video “Vuvala Kavoro” was a short drama of a couple during the lockdown that experienced domestic violence.

The fourth video “Na Wai Vakaviti” tried to understand the importance of herbal medicine to people, by listening to a village herbalist as she explained her journey with herbal medicine and her views on western medicine.

The final video “Neglected Tropical Disease” was on Filariasis and Dengue and showed how the disease was neglected in Fiji, how it was transmitted, managed, prevented and controlled.

The Festival was an opportunity for the University to showcase the talents of students and staff in disseminating information to the public that directly impacted on their health and well-being.

## Short Articles



The Umanand Prasad School of Medicine and Health Sciences students conducted an Awareness Week that included a clean-up campaign on Monday, a COVID-19 update on Tuesday, a communicable disease presentation on Wednesday, a presentation on NCDs and STIs on Thursday, and a blood drive and medical screening on Friday.



The Fiji National University Students' Association today donated medical and business textbooks to the University of Fiji Library.

The books were presented by the Fiji National University Students' Association (FNUSA) National President Ketn Lal, who was accompanied by members of the FNUSA.



The Language, Literature, and Communication Department had a display to commemorate Language and Poetry Day. The theme for Language Day was “Multilingualism for Inclusion in Education and Society” while the theme for Poetry Day was “Everyone should touch the flow of love which is flowing through the Poetry World”.

# Staff Profiles



**Dr Ramendra Prasad**  
PhD; MSc; BSc GCED; Dip Ed

**Dr Ramendra Prasad** completed his *Ph.D.* by publications in Modeling and Simulations from University of Southern Queensland, Australia. He has a *B.Sc.* (Mathematics & Physics) and *M.Sc.* in Physics from the University of the South Pacific, Fiji. Dr Prasad is currently a Senior Lecturer and Head of Science Department at the University of Fiji. He has authored over 20 articles in peer-reviewed journals (mostly Scopus Quartile 1) and reputed conferences. His work has cumulative citations exceeding 400 with an H-index of 10. Dr Prasad has guided five Master of Science students to completion and is currently co-supervising MSc and PhD students both locally and internationally. His research interests include advanced machine learning approaches, energy modeling, energy management, environmental & atmospheric modeling, hydrological modeling, ocean wave modeling and analytics. He is an active member of *South Pacific Physics Society* (Professional Member), USQ's *Advanced Data Analytics Research Group* and *Communications and Atmospheric (Space) Physics Group* (USP). He is also the programme coordinator for Post Graduate Diploma in Energy and Environment at UniFiji.



**Mohammed Farik**

*MINFTECH, PGDITC UniFiji, BA S.Pac, IDTT FIT, PDBC LCM, CSIE, CSAE, CASP+, CNSP, CNVP, PenTest+, CSAP, CySA+, CSIS, Security+, CIOS, Network+, A+ CompTIA, MIITP, MIEEE*

**Mr Mohammed Farik** is a CyberSecurity Expert certified by CompTIA, USA. He completed his Masters and Postgraduate Diploma in Information Technology from The University of Fiji, Bachelor of Arts from the University of the South Pacific, Diploma in Professional Business Computing (DPBC) from London College of Management, England, and International Diploma in Tertiary Teaching (IDTT) from Fiji Institute of Technology. Mr Farik is currently a Lecturer in Computer Science and Information Technology at UniFiji teaching courses such as Research Methodology, Information Security, Network Security, Management Information Systems and more. He has peer-reviewed 36 papers for 15 international Journals and published 29 papers in international peer-reviewed journals that have received a total of 170 citations on Google Scholar. His research interest lies in CyberSecurity issues.

# Tauyavutakina Veiwekani Vouveirauna iTaukei Trust Fund Board (TTFB) keina Centre For iTaukei Studies (CIS)

E a volavola mai na iTaukei Trust Fund ki vua na Vice Chancellor iVakatawa ni Yunivesiti ko Professor Shaista Shameem, e na nodratou gadreva me ratou cakacaka vata kei na Centre for iTaukei Studies me vakasaqarai na veisala eso me rau qarava vata kina na veika e kovuta na yalava ni nodrau veiqaravi ka me sotavi kina vakavinaka na veika erau dui tutaka. E a tauyavutaki na iTaukei Trust Fund Board ena 2004 e na ruku ni iTaukei Trust Fund Act me qarava na nodra vakatoroicaketaki na iTaukei kei na Rotuma. E vakanamata (mission) na iTaukei Trust Fund Board ki na kena vakatoroicaketaki ka tokoni na vei ituvatuva ka, ka na laveta cake na i tuvaki se i vakatagedegede ni bula, ka vukea na kena vakabulabulataki ka maroroi na nodra i tovo kei na i vakarau vakavanua na i Taukei kei na Rotuma. E na kena vakalekalekatakai, e vakanamata na veiwekani qo e nai naki bibi qo:

- me vukea na kena vakatuvulici ka vakabulabulataki na noda uma vosa, itovo kei na i yau ni vanua/i yau bula eda kilai tani kina na iTaukei, kei na sala cava e rawa ni vakayagataki kina na veika oqo me i vurevure ni i yau, na tiko vinaka kei na bula sautu.

E okati eke na kedra kunekunetaki ka vakatoroicaketaki na porokaramu se project me maroroya ka tokona na noda umavosa, noda i tovo, i vakarau kei na cakacaka ni liga, me tokona na cakacaka ni vakekeli (research) kei na kila-ka vakavanua vaka i Taukei, oka kina o Rotuma me rawa ni kilai, taleitaki ka vakamareqeti na veika e nodra dina. E sa ciqoma ko Professor Shameem na kerekere qo, ka sa vakavinavinakataka na kauwai ni iTaukei Trust Fund Board me cakacaka vata kei na Centre for iTaukei Studies.

## महामारी और विश्व मानवता

14<sup>th</sup> June, 2021

Manisha Ramrakha  
Hindi Lecturer  
The University of Fiji

Presented in International Virtual Seminar- Organized by the Faculty of Education, GLOCAL University, Delhi, India.  
(Summarized in 300 words)

यह किसी से नहीं छुपा है कि विश्व में मानवता त्रस्त है। छोटा देश हो या पूर्ण विकसित, सभी इससे पीड़ित हैं। सब अविश्वसनीय एवं अकाल्पनिक समस्याओं को झेल रहे हैं, खासकर डे-टू-डे जीविका कामाने वालों पर तो जैसे पहाड़ टूट पड़ा हो।

इस विषय पर बहुत सारी चर्चा चल रही है। यू-ट्यूब पर बड़ी भयावह और नकारात्मक बातें सुनने, देखने और पढ़ने को मिल रही हैं। इस महामारी का मुख्य कारण क्या है, मैं उस पर तो चर्चा नहीं करूँगी पर इतना जरूर है कि आज मानव, तरक्की की होड़ में प्रकृति से दूर होता जा रहा है और शायद यही मानव के उखड़ने का कारण बन गया है। मानव बेझिझक, बेखौफ अप्राकृतिक कार्य कर रहा है जो हमारी संस्कृति और मानव-प्रकृति के हिसाब से उसे नहीं करना चाहिए।

मनुष्य एक प्राकृतिक प्राणी है, पंचतत्व- जल, वायु, अग्नि, पृथ्वी और आकाश से निर्मित यह मानव शरीर है। जब-जब मानव, इन तत्वों से दूरी बना लेता है तब- तब मानव जीवन संकट में आता है। आज भी यही हो रहा है। वैदिक ऋचाओं में बहुत से ऐसे मन्त्र मिलते हैं जिनमें कहा गया है कि यदि कहीं स्वर्ग है तो वह इस धरती पर ही है।

परमात्मा ने मनुष्य को बहुत ही सुन्दर व्यवस्था के साथ इस स्वर्ग समान धरती पर भेजा, सौ वर्ष की आयु दी, बहुत ही स्पष्ट और वैज्ञानिक जीवन पद्धति दी जिसके अन्तर्गत चार आश्रमों का पालन करते हुए सुखमय जीवन जीने का मार्ग बतलाया, यानि कि जन्म से लेकर प्रथम पच्चीस वर्ष का समय- शारीरिक, मानसिक, बौद्धिक और आध्यत्मिक शक्तियों को जोड़ने का है, जिसे ब्रह्मचर्य कहते हैं। द्वितीय पच्चीस वर्ष का समय गृहस्थ जीवन में अपने बच्चों के भविष्य को उज्वल बनाने के लिए तन-मन-धन से लग जाने का समय बताया है ताकि बच्चे समाज के, देश के श्रेष्ठ नागरिक बन सकें इसके बाद का समय जब तक जिओ निःस्वार्थ सेवा करो-समाज की, देश की, इस अवस्था में अपने-पराये का भाव नहीं रह जाना चाहिए। दुख का विषय है कि आज मानव- जीवन से यह सब समाप्त होता जा रहा है।

विश्व मानवता के त्रस्त होने का दूसरा कारण है, मानव आपसी होड़ में, अपनी पँचन्द्रियों के वशीभूत होकर, वो सब कुछ कर रहा है जो उसे नहीं करना चाहिए। आज विद्या का अर्थ ही

बदल गया है, विद्या ग्रहण करते हैं, धन कमाने के लिए और पदोन्नति के लिए। समाज, देश परिवार के प्रति प्रेम, अपनी संस्कृति, संस्कारों और कर्त्तव्यनिष्ठा के भाव को सिखाने वाली अपनी मातृ भाषा को छोड़ रहे हैं। आज प्रार्थना का भाव बदल गया है। सांसारिक सुख-भोग पाने के लिए पूजा-पाठ करते हैं जबकि वेद का मन्त्र कहता है-  
ओउम् विश्वानि देव सवितर्दुरितानि परासुव। यद् भद्रन्तन आ सुव।  
अर्थात्- हे शुद्धस्वरूप, सब सुखों के दाता परमेश्वर, आप कृपा करके हमारे सम्पूर्ण दुर्गुण, दुर्व्यसन और दुखों को दूर कर दीजिए। जो कल्याणकारक गुण, कर्म, स्वभाव और पदार्थ हैं, वे सब हमको प्राप्त कराइए।

इसी तरह एक और मन्त्र है जिसमें हम मन के लिए प्रार्थना करते हैं, मन मानव शरीर में सब से अधिक शक्तिशाली होता है, इसे दूसरे शब्दों में इच्छा-शक्ति भी कह सकते हैं। मन में सकारात्मक या नकारात्मक जैसे भी विचार उठते हैं जैसे ही हमारे कर्म होते हैं और उसी तरह का कर्मफल भी होता है। मन्त्र है-  
यज्जाग्रतो दूरमुदिति देवं तदुसुतय्य तथैवैति।  
दूरंगमं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरिक्ं तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु॥

अर्थात्- हे भगवन् ! मेरा यह मन जागते हुए तथा सोते हुए दूर-दूर तक जाता रहता है। यह विद्युत का केंद्र पुंज है। मेरा मन शुभ संकल्प वाला होवे। अतः यहाँ भी ईश्वर से सांसारिक वस्तुएं न माँगकर मन की सकारात्मक सोच एवं मन की शुद्धता की प्रार्थना की गई है। यही मानव जीवन के कल्याण की प्रार्थना है, परन्तु आज मानव एक दूसरे ही रास्ते से सुख की कामना कर रहा है, हो सकता यही मानव के दुख का कारण बन रहा है।

हार्दिक शुभ कामनाओं के साथ  
धन्यवाद