



# The University of Fiji Uni MATTERS

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## UniFiji's first ever Prom night – A successful beginning

The University's first ever Prom night was held at the Trans International Hotel in Nadi on Saturday May 28.

The Prom was organized by the University's students' association. It was a huge success according to the executive members of the students' association. The inaugural event attracted over 150 guests.

"The purpose of the prom night was to socialize," said Sheetal Chand, secretary of the students' association. She said that it was also an excellent opportunity for students to mingle with the University staff.

Miss Chand added that it had taken them approximately 2 weeks to organize this event.

"The prom was jointly organized by the students from the School of Humanities and Arts, School of Science and Technology, School of Business and Economics and Foundation Studies programme," said Miss Chand.

She added that an organizing committee was set up to prepare for the event. She further explained that entry to the prom was open to staff, students and former students.

To conclude, Miss Chand said that she was optimistic that events such as prom night would continue as it helped staff and students to spend quality time outside the lecture room and get to know each other better.



Students enjoying the evening at the inaugural University Prom

## Associate Professor Cliff Benson Presents Conference Paper

Associate Professor Cliff Benson attended the 46th Regional Language Centre (RELC) International Seminar in Singapore from 18-20 April 2011. The conference theme was 'Teaching Language to Learners of Different Age Groups'.

Mr Benson also presented a paper at the Conference titled '*Using Reflective Journals as a Teacher Education Tool*'. The paper reported on journals written by Post Graduate Diploma in Second Language Teaching summer school students in a Dec 2010/Jan 2011 summer school. The students' writing was a valuable tool in enhancing their learning about ways of better teaching reading.

At the request of the RELC librarian, Mr Benson also presented a copy of his textbook, 'Waka Five' to the RELC library.



Mr Benson with the RELC librarian in Singapore

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## Sumeet Tappoo performs at UniFiji

Fiji born singing sensation Sumeet Tappoo dazzled the audience during his performance at the University of Fiji's Saweni campus on Friday 27 May. This was part of the nine concerts that he scheduled for his Fiji tour.

Staff, students and other guests at the concert were astonished by Sumeet's talents and thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon with music from 'yester years' as well as songs from Sumeet's latest album 'Meri Deewangi'.

UniFiji student Karshika Dharan described the concert as "really amazing". She said that she loved the concert and thanked Sumeet for taking this initiative.

Students from a nearby school and members of the Saweni community were also present at the concert.

Sumeet also held six concerts across the temples of Fiji as part of a 'Bhajan Yatra'. He travelled across the country to perform in Suva, Lautoka, Nadi, Ba and Nadera.

A special concert in the Shirdi Sai temple in Suva also took place as part of his tribute to Shri Sathya Sai Baba.

Sumeet released his first album 'Sumeet Tappoo sings Mukesh' at a tender age of 11 and in doing so, earned the nickname 'wonder child artist'.

Sumeet also holds a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Technology Sydney.



**Sumeet Tappoo entertains the audience in Saweni**

## Postgraduate Certificate in International Relations classes begin

The Centre for International and Regional Affairs began its second session of the Postgraduate Certificate in International Relations earlier this month. The two-course programme was conducted at the Suva Campus from 2 May to 14 May.

This year, twenty five students enrolled in the Postgraduate Certificate programme which was officially launched by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola in January last year.

CIRA's Postgraduate programmes International Relations are designed to prepare graduates to utilize their academic studies in practical career applications. Both the Postgraduate Certificate and the Postgraduate Diploma in International Relations are structured to assist the professional

development of diplomats, public servants, political analysts, military professionals, journalists, NGOs and others requiring sophisticated analytical skills to interpret and assess the implications of global and regional issues.

These programmes also assist those hoping to prepare themselves for careers with Government, industry, media, international organisations and NGOs where a thorough grounding in international relations is helpful.

The lecturers who delivered the courses were Dr. Michael O'Keefe, Visiting Fellow, Centre for International and Regional Affairs, University of Fiji and Senior Lecturer in International Relations at La Trobe University (Melbourne), Dr Hugh Craft, Visiting Professor, Centre for International and

Regional Affairs, University of Fiji, former Australian Diplomat and former Chief Political Adviser to the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat and now visiting Fellow at the Asia Pacific college of Diplomacy, Australian National University in Canberra and Mr. Robin Nair, Director, Centre for International and Regional Affairs, University of Fiji, Visiting Fellow, Asia Pacific College of Diplomacy, Australian National University, former Fiji Diplomat and former Australian Diplomat.



**International Relations students with their Course facilitators at the Suva Campus**

## Academics from the Australian Catholic University visit UniFiji

The Department of Education hosted two visiting academics from the Australian Catholic University from 16 to 21 May.

Professor Jude Butcher, Director of the Centre for Advancing Community Engagement at The Australian Catholic University and Mr. Ken Ralph, a lawyer by profession and Director of ACU's Yalbalanga Aboriginal Education Centre visited UniFiji at the invitation of Associate Professor Ken Nobin, Head of the Department of Education.

The purpose of Professor Jude Butcher's visit was to view the work done by the Department of Education, spend time with students and staff and produce an Advisory Report.

"This he has completed and the Report has been congratulatory of the work being done and insightful with its challenges," said Associate Professor Ken Nobin.

"Professor Butcher also visited local villages, our other teaching centre in Ba and spent some time with staff at the Centre for Itaukei Studies," he added.

Associate Professor Ken Nobin added that they were indeed fortunate to have hosted his visit and looked forward to a continuing relationship with his Institute.

Meanwhile, the purpose of Mr. Ken Ralph's visit was to assist in the review of the Department of Education and to meet with the Director and staff of the

Centre for Itaukei Studies. He also accompanied Professor Jude Butcher on visits to local villages

Since Mr. Ken Ralph is a lawyer, he was invited to present a lecture to the Law students in Saweni on '*Indigenous People and the Law: Perspectives from Australia*'. Associate Professor Ken Nobin said that the lecture was videotaped and would be made available to the law students at the Suva campus in Samabula.

"As a result of Mr. Ken Ralph's visit, the relationship between our CIS and Yalbalanga at ACU has been established and will grow with research possibilities, exchange visits and conferences," he concluded.

## Girmit Smriti 2011 - An adventure of Indenture

The School of Humanities and Arts organized 'Girmit Smriti' on Friday 13 May at the Saweni campus. The Chief Guest at the function was Professor Subramani of the Fiji National University. This year's Girmit celebration was well attended by staff, students and members of the Saweni Community. The programmes consisted of speeches, songs, cultural dance items, poems and a panel discussion chaired by the Dean of the School of Humanities and Arts, Professor Satendra Nandan.

Vice Chancellor Professor Muralidhar welcomed guests to the Girmit Day celebrations and said that Girmit Smriti had become a part of the University's annual calendar of events. "We believe that it is an important occasion to remind ourselves of our history," he said.

Professor Muralidhar said that the story of Girmit was part of the history of Fiji and he hoped that the students in Fiji got exposed to a serious study of Girmit.

Professor Muralidhar added that Girmit was about dislocation, despair, suffering, uncertainty and pain. But it was also about assimilation, hope, renewal and celebration, and for the younger generation, it was about acceptance and a new identity of united Fiji. "I urge the young women and men of all persuasions present here today to make a

commitment to realizing that noble vision," he said.

The Chief Guest, Professor Subramani talked about the experiences of his father, who was an indentured labourer from Kottayam, a city in the Indian state of Kerala. He had arrived on the ship *Ganges* in 1912.

"My father died when I was very young, so I could not find out why he came or what his village was," said Professor Subramani. He said that many questions remained unanswered but he could remember that his father had very delicate hands, hardly meant for working in the cane fields. "He read books written in Malayalam language; he could have easily been from one of the Namboodari clans in Kerala," he added.

The final items included wonderful poems, songs and cultural dances and everyone agreed that this year's programme was a success.



Chief Guest Professor Subramani



Cultural dance at this year's Girmit Smriti



Musical performance by Naresh Chand and his group

# 2011 Graduation Ceremony

The University's fourth graduation ceremony was held at the main campus in Saweni last month and saw 159 students graduating. This is twice the number of students who graduated in the 2010 ceremony.

The President of the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency Ratu Epeli Nailatikau was also installed as the second Chancellor of the University of Fiji during the graduation ceremony.

Ratu Epeli Nailatikau succeeds the late Ratu Josefa Iloilo, The Turaga Na Tui Vuda and Former President of Fiji as the Chancellor of UniFiji.

The University Senate also approved the award of the honorary degree of Doctor of the University to His Excellency. The degree was conferred during the graduation ceremony.

The University's Vice Chancellor Professor Muralidhar welcomed everyone to the graduation and said that it was a privilege to have H.E Ratu Epeli Nailatikau as the University's Chancellor.

He also reported that 54% of the graduates were women, and of the twelve students who would be receiving prizes for outstanding performance, ten were women.

"It is also pleasing to note that 43% of those graduating today have completed postgraduate studies," he said. He also added that all five students graduating with a Masters degree in Literature & Language (English) were women. "As we celebrate the success of our students in this hall, I offer my heartiest congratulations to all the graduands," said Professor Muralidhar.

"You have worked hard while at the University and you have demonstrated a good grasp of the subjects you studied. Some of you

may know exactly what you will be doing, and indeed, some of you may even realize your dreams. On the other hand life could spring some surprises and you could find yourself doing things entirely different from what you had planned," he said.

The new Chancellor, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau said that he was deeply honoured but greatly humbled to be installed as the Chancellor of the University of Fiji.

"I thank you for the great honour you have bestowed on me, and I express my sincere appreciation to you all for this gesture of goodwill as well as for such a touching installation ceremony," he said.

"The people of Fiji, the people of Bau, the members of my family and I are extremely pleased to be associated with the University of Fiji that is now in its sixth year of operations," he added.

H.E Ratu Epeli Nailatikau also acknowledged with much appreciation the contributions made and the role played by the foundation Chancellor, the former President and Tui Vuda the late Ratu Josefa Iloilovatu Uluivuda in the success story of the University of Fiji during its period of infancy. He went on to thank the chiefs and people of Vuda for being part of the magnificent gift by the Sabha to the people of Fiji.

"There is no doubt that the University has already made a proud and indelible mark in the academic arena," said H.E Ratu Epeli Nailatikau.

He added that each graduation had seen the growth in the number of graduands receiving hard earned degrees, diplomas and certificates. The University has quickly moved into an enviable position by establishing the Umanand Prasad Medical School, the School of Law, School of Business and Economics, School of Science and Technology and the School of Humanities and Arts.

"As I undertake my responsibilities as the new Chancellor may I remind the graduands that as of today you are all

the ambassadors of the University from your different walks of life," he concluded.



*Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the University Council Pt. Bhuwan Dutt confers the honorary degree of Doctor of the University to H.E Ratu Epeli Nailatikau*



*Graduating students of 2011*



*Graduate receiving his award from the Chancellor, H.E Ratu Epeli Nailatikau*



*H.E Ratu Epeli Nailatikau with first lady Adi Koila Nailatikau*

## New medical equipment for UPSM

The Umanand Prasad School of medicine recently purchased medical equipment worth over \$FJD200, 000. The equipment was displayed at the Umanand Prasad School of Medicine last month to allow the University community and the media to view the state of the art equipment.

The equipment was purchased from a supplier in Australia. Most of the equipment is sourced from India by the supplier.

Vice Chancellor Professor Muralidhar said that the equipment covered a wide range, from glassware to microscopes, stethoscopes to electrocardiograph machines, and from charts to models. "Essentially we have the equipment to carry out basic experiments in Physiology, Microbiology, Anatomy, and Pathology," he said.

"We have 120 medical students on our roll, and they will all benefit from the equipment. Some of the equipment can also be used by students doing Biology, Chemistry and Physics at the degree level," he added.



*UPSM students with their Lecturer Mrs. Alka Sewram*



*UPSM students with the anatomy display*



*Equipment exhibition at the Umanand Prasad School of Medicine*

## Kava (Yaqona) - A Seminar by Prof. Sotheeswaran

The department of science organized a seminar on Kava (Yaqona) at the main campus recently. The seminar was conducted by Professor Subramaniam Sotheeswaran, Senior visiting Professor, Institute of Chemistry (Ceylon) and visiting professor of the University of Fiji.

Professor Sotheeswaran talked about kava in general and discussed his research findings with the audience. He talked about different ways that kava was consumed and its effect on people. He discussed kava as a traditional South Pacific drink as well as kava tablets that were developed by European pharmaceutical companies.

"Kava is a traditional drink in South Pacific countries and has been consumed for centuries without any serious ill-effects," said Professor Sotheeswaran.

Professor Sotheeswaran said that Europeans who came to the South Pacific realized the importance of kava and discovered that kava contained kava lactones which had bio activities such as sleep-inducing,

sedating, central nervous system relaxing, analgesic, anaesthetic, anticonvulsant and antimycotic.

"Subsequent research showed that kava was as good as green tea as a cancer preventive agent," added professor Sotheeswaran. He also reported that because of the anti-cancer properties of kava, the more it is consumed by a particular population, the lower the cancer incidence for that population.

Kava roots were used in the early 1990s by the European Pharmaceutical Industries. As the roots became expensive and since stem peels also had the six biologically active kava lactones, the pharmaceutical industries started buying kava peelings to extract the organics for their pills/tablets.

Subsequent research showed the presence of alkaloids in the root and stem peelings which may have contributed to the reported cases of liver toxicity in Europe amongst pill

takers. Professor Sotheeswaran said that peelings of aerial parts of kava should have been avoided by the European Pharmaceutical industries as they were now seen as dangerous from toxicological point of view.

"However, kava has been shown to be an effective alternative treatment in mild to moderate cases of anxiety," said Professor Sotheeswaran.

He said that strong evidence existed from human trial data that kava preparations are effective anti-anxiety agents and an evidence grade of 'A' had been given for kava as an anti-anxiety drug.

Professor Sotheeswaran added that kava has also been used traditionally as an analgesic (pain-reliever).

"Almost all kava drinkers in the pacific have experienced the anaesthetic activity of kava on the tongue and the linings of their mouth," he concluded.

## The future of Noni in the South Pacific— A Seminar by Prof. Sotheeswaran

Professor Sotheeswaran, visiting professor of the University of Fiji conducted a seminar on Noni titled 'The Future of Noni in the South Pacific' last month.

He spoke on the different uses of Noni, its ingredients and the commercialization of Noni. Professor Sotheeswaran also discussed the safety issues surrounding the Noni juice.

Noni or *Morinda citrifolia* is native to Southeast Asia but has been extensively spread throughout the Indian subcontinent, Pacific islands, French Polynesia, and recently the Dominican Republic. Tahiti remains the most prominent growing location.

Noni Juice is being widely used as a herbal medicine in many countries and remains a major export for some South Pacific countries.

Professor Sotheeswaran said that Noni had gained popularity as an export product after the Ban placed by Germany and a few other countries on another South Pacific plant – kava.

“Other uses of Noni include Noni soaps, shampoos, skin creams herbal tea and Noni tablets,” said Professor Sotheeswaran.

Professor Sotheeswaran also discussed the Marketing of Noni juice in various countries. “If one visits Pharmacies in most parts of the world, including Australia, Fiji and Sri Lanka, one will see eye catching advertisements of imported noni juice promoting it as “Non-diabetic juice,” he said.

“The sales of this so-called “non-diabetic” juice are booming in many parts of the world including Sri Lanka,” he added.

He added that the advertisements claimed that noni juice had the ability to stimulate the sluggish pancreatic cells of diabetics to secrete more insulin and that noni also stimulated body cells to take up more insulin in order to utilise glucose more efficiently.

“The advertisements go on to claim that some researchers have isolated and identified active substances like proxeronine, which participate in many metabolic processes,” he explained.

“But if anyone attempts to check the veracity of these claims in the literature, one can see references to proxeronine and its discoverers Dr Heinicke and Dr Solomon only in websites advertised by Tahitian Noni International – a Commercial Company that markets noni juice to the world,” said Professor Sotheeswaran.

He proclaimed that the results were not to be found in any recognized international journals and the structure of Xeronine (the active ingredient of Noni) could not be found in the literature.

Discussing the claims made by companies that Noni is a Non-diabetic juice, Professor Sotheeswaran said that there was no proper scientific evidence available to confirm if Noni had anti-diabetic activity.

“However, we have evidence to show that noni juice has good antioxidant activity,” he said.

Antioxidants are substances that help delay and prevent oxidation and are present in some foods. Antioxidants are needed to prevent the actions of reactive oxygen and nitrogen species that are generated internally, on biomolecules.

“Total antioxidant capacity (TAC) assay showed that commercially prepared Noni drinks had the highest followed by sweet potato leaves,” explained Professor Sotheeswaran.

Professor Sotheeswaran finally warned that some commercial brands of Noni juice may be high in potassium.

“While potassium is a valuable nutrient in a normal diet, persons with advanced kidney disease cannot excrete it properly and should avoid noni juice which has been known to cause *hyperkalemia*,” he concluded.

## Careers Expo at Xavier College

The University of Fiji was invited by the Ministry of Education to participate in a careers expo at Xavier College, Ba on May 26.

The expo attracted over 2,000 students from Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki.

The Department of Marketing and Public Relations led the University's campaign at Xavier joined by Mr. Salvin Nand from the School of Law, Mrs. Priyatma Singh from the School of Science and Technology, Mr. Ryan Singh from the School of Business and Economics and Dr. Ashish Mishra and Dr. Lagnajita Datta from the Umanand Prasad School of Medicine.

School students thoroughly enjoyed the day as it was an excellent opportunity

for them to meet our academic staff and ask questions regarding the programmes offered at UniFiji.

