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USPBeat Magazine

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NEW MULTI PURPOSE THEATRE OPENED AT USP

The Honorable Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama and the Japanese Ambassador to Fiji, His Excellency, Mr Yutaka Yoshizawa on their way to tour the new Multi Purpose Theatre together with the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration and Regional Campuses), Dr Esther Williams.

Students of the University of the South Pacific will now benefit from a more enhanced learning experience after a new state-of-the-art Multi Purpose Theatre was officially opened on 22 February, 2012.

The new facility was opened by the Honorable Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama and the Japanese Ambassador to Fiji, His Excellency, Mr Yutaka Yoshizawa at the University's Laucala Campus in Suva.

The Multi Purpose Theatre worth JPY 857 million (approximately F\$18 million), was built as Phase II of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre. It has a seating capacity of over 300 and is installed with stage equipments and video cameras.

Speaking at opening of the Multi Purpose Theatre, the Prime Minister said that the occasion was a reminder of Japan's long standing relationship with the Pacific.

"Fiji is proud to provide and convert its bilateral assistance from Japan into a regional initiative through USP. This means that Fiji is sharing its benefits with her sister Pacific nations," he added.

In thanking the Government of Japan for its generosity and support, Honorable Commodore Josaia Bainimarama also acknowledged that the significant contribution made by Japan was at a time of global financial crisis which was exacerbated by severe natural disasters and climate challenges.

"Given such circumstances, the successful delivery and completion of the project has made this gift even more valuable and meaningful, and it shall be treasured," he mentioned.

While emphasising the importance of using ICT, the Prime Minister applauded USP for taking a leading role in the region in this area.

He explained that the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre at USP is an information and knowledge hub that will promote the development of knowledge societies as a 'centre of excellence' in ICT in the Pacific.

"It will be used by Fijians and other Pacific Islanders. It will benefit not only the students of today but many more to come. It will also help to overcome the tyranny of distances and isolation," he elaborated.

In his remarks, the Vice Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra thanked those present at the historic occasion which he said "means so much to the University and the governments and people of the Pacific Islands."

He said that the Multi Purpose Theatre and the Japan-Pacific ICT

Centre is an example of development assistance that will benefit the region.

"The willingness of Japan to share its knowledge and technology with Pacific Island Countries demonstrates Japan's deep commitment to meeting the needs of our region," he added.

Professor Chandra also acknowledged the role of the Fiji Government in facilitating the ICT Centre project.

"The Fiji Government magnanimously accepted this investment as bilateral assistance and has provided many other benefits without which this Centre could not have been established."

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Prime Minister and his Government for their support and interest in USP.

"USP is confident that it provides outstanding returns to the Fiji Government and the people of Fiji through its quality, relevant and cost-effective higher education, research and community engagement," he stated.

According to the Vice-Chancellor, the University is working with the ministries in Fiji to support their efforts to fully leverage ICTs for all facets of Fiji's economy and society.

H.E. Mr Yutaka Yoshizawa said over the years, Japan has developed a very close partnership with USP and that a total of 70 million US dollars worth of Japanese assistance provided to build the Pacific-ICT Centre has brought the partnership to new heights.

"The ICT Centre is expected to play an important role in closing the digital divide gap in the Pacific region, especially with its numerous courses on ICT related studies supported by the newest facility and equipment, excellent members of the faculty and technical cooperation by JICA," the Ambassador noted.

H.E. Mr Yoshizawa explained that the Multi Purpose Theatre is expected to serve not only as an appropriate venue for a wide variety of important academic events but will also serve as an ideal venue for cultural events that would charm the people of Fiji and patrons from USP member countries.

The occasion also marked the opening of the international conference on ICTs and Oceanian Cultures that was held at the new Multi Purpose Theatre.

A photo and illustrative exhibition was also staged at the same time to show the state of recovery and reconstruction after the great east Japan earthquake in March last year.

AUSTRALIA-USP-NEW ZEALAND CONSULTATION MEETING

The USP team led by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra met with representatives of Australia and New Zealand during the high-level consultation meeting.

A high-level consultation meeting between the University of the South Pacific and its key development partners, Australia and New Zealand was held on 21 February, 2012.

The tripartite meeting, which was chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, was hosted by the University at the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre located at the Laucala Campus in Suva.

Attended by representatives of Australia and New Zealand, the University's Senior Management Team and other senior staff members, the high-level consultation meeting, held twice a year is of importance to the University as both Australia and New Zealand provide support and assistance towards USP's core budget as well as for the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

In his opening remarks, Professor Chandra said that Australia and New Zealand have traditionally been the strongest development partners ever since the University was established in 1968. He added that they continue to be among USP's closest development partners.

The consultation was an opportunity to reflect on the progress made by the University under its current Strategic Plan and provided updates on the key achievements of Australian and New Zealand funded programmes and projects since the last consultation meeting in September last year.

"It gives us all an opportunity for very frank discussion about expectations, achievements, what needs to be done to improve and how to make this partnership even better," Professor Chandra outlined.

The Vice-Chancellor also used the occasion to thank both Australia and New Zealand for their confidence in the University.

With focus on cross cutting issues particularly around disability and gender, Professor Chandra assured that such issues have started to be mainstreamed into the University's normal operations and are already a part of the University's policies and plans.

During the meeting, AusAID representative, Ms Sarah Goulding, Counsellor for

Tuvalu and Fiji, expressed that Australia is pleased to be part of the consultation.

"We really value our long standing relationship with the University. Our partnership that we are forming with New Zealand in having a more strategic relationship with the University through partnership agreements is an engagement which we would very much like to deepen," she said.

Ms Goulding advised USP to look at ensuring that the partnership agreement has a strong focus on results and models such as incentive programmes become a very useful way to work.

"An institution like USP that is a key agency in the region in training current and future leaders of the Pacific and through research provide policy relevant knowledge to the Pacific has come out as a really important place for us to focus our regional resources to," she added.

Similar views were shared by the Acting New Zealand High Commissioner, His Excellency, Mr Phillip Taula, who said that New Zealand was very happy with the progress made by the University over the last two years. He acknowledged the leadership provided by the Vice-Chancellor and the efforts of his staff.

He elaborated that the NZ-USP partnership is a sign of increased confidence in the University.

"We are very happy to be providing core support and believe that this is the best way to be able to help at this point as it allows USP to use resources in line with its Strategic Plans and its priorities."

"We look forward to seeing the good work continue and results being translated to better student outcomes at all campuses," he told representatives of USP.

He added that New Zealand is eager to work with USP on the new Strategic Plan and the new partnership arrangement.

Professor Chandra thanked Australia and New Zealand for their overview and helpful remarks.

A number of key reports were presented and deliberated upon during the meeting.

FIRST-EVER MANDARIN COURSE GETS LAUNCHED

The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Mr Huang Yong launches the first Mandarin course at USP. Also present: the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra and the two Directors of the Confucius Institute at USP, Professor Denggui Li (far left) and Ms Joan Yee (far right).



People in Fiji and around the region will now have the opportunity to learn the Chinese language by taking Mandarin courses offered by the Confucius Institute at the University of the South Pacific.

The University successfully launched the first Mandarin course at the new Confucius Institute located at the Laucala Campus in Suva, on 3 February, 2012.

The Confucius Institute was established at USP following an agreement between the University and the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (BUPT) with the approval of Hanban - the Confucius Institute headquarters.

About 70 students from various sectors like government departments, Chinese companies and tourist service providers are expected to take up the new course.

The new course focuses on basic daily social communication skills of Chinese Mandarin - listening and speaking. It starts with Chinese pronunciation, and includes the most practical communication tasks needed to meet the basic requirements of daily life in China.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra described the launch of the Mandarin course

as the foundation for a concrete relationship between the Government and people of the People's Republic of China and the University.

"USP needs to engage with the major players in the world and China is definitely one of them, so for us it is a very important development. We see this as the beginning of what should be a bigger partnership between China and USP," he added.

Professor Chandra acknowledged the support provided by the People's Republic of China, Hanban and BUPT towards the establishment of the Confucius Institute at USP.

Currently, there are four members based at the Institute: one local director, one Chinese director and two Chinese language teachers.

The Confucius Institutes, which are aimed at promoting Chinese language and culture, are spread across 105 countries around the world.

Professor Chandra highlighted USP's plans to further engage with BUPT in the future.

He thanked those who attended the ceremony including the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency, Mr Huang Yong.

In his remarks, H.E. Mr Huang stated that the

Confucius Institute at USP offers an opportunity for local people to learn the Chinese language and to better understand China. It also provides a platform for educational and cultural exchange.

"The friendly collaboration between China and Fiji has been booming in various fields and there has been growth in demand for Chinese language and cultural learning in the local societies," he noted.

H.E. Mr Huang acknowledged the role played by USP and thanked Professor Chandra and other members of the University for contributing towards the establishment of the Confucius Institute.

The Directors of the Confucius Institute at USP, Professor Denggui Li and Ms Joan Yee said that the new course marks an important stage in the development of the Institute.

While congratulating the first cohort of students who were present at the opening of the course, both Professor Li and Ms Yee reminded them to work hard to learn the Chinese language and understand the Chinese culture and to become "messengers" between China and Fiji in the fields of economics, culture and education.

"The Confucius Institute at USP will be your Chinese home in Fiji forever," students were told.



UNIVERSITY UNVEILS NEW SOLAR PROJECT



The Korean Ambassador to Fiji, His Excellency, Mr Hae-Wook Cheong (center) commissions the new 45 Kilowatts Grid Connected Photovoltaic (PV) System as the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra (right) looks on.

The University of the South Pacific achieved a major milestone in the area of renewable energy after successfully launching a new solar system, the largest in Fiji, at its Marine Campus in Suva.

A 45-Kilowatt Grid Connected Photovoltaic (PV) System – a joint project by the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) was commissioned by the Korean Ambassador to Fiji, His Excellency, Mr Hae-Wook Cheong on 9 February 2012.

The PV system is expected to generate about 10% of electricity needs of the University's Marine Campus and help reduce USP's carbon footprint by more than 32 Metric tonnes of CO₂e annually.

In commissioning the new system, the Korean Ambassador to Fiji, H.E. Mr Hae-Wook described the new PV system as a "monumental" work to herald a new dawn of renewable energy era in the Pacific region.

"I have high hope that this landmark collaboration between USP and KOICA will help Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to better address the challenges of climate change in years to come," he said.

The Ambassador anticipates the successful completion of the other parts of the project soon. He thanked all the stakeholders of the project for their excellent work.

In his remarks, the Vice-Chancellor and President of

USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra emphasised that the need to move to renewable energy was no longer a choice for PICs but a "necessity" – given that diesel and other fuels are becoming economically unviable for PICs.

"The PICs have been identified as some of the most heavily petroleum dependent countries with petroleum intensity ranging from 75% to 100%. Affordable and clean energy also helps develop society by providing income generation opportunities, lessening the burden on women and improving the overall living standards," Professor Chandra stated.

The project will further enable USP to undertake research in clean energy technologies and contribute towards the sustainable development choices of its member countries.

"This project will be used as a training site for our students and regional energy professionals. USP is collaborating with those in the renewable energy industry and other partners to develop training curriculum and certification scheme for technicians/installers/designers," the Vice-Chancellor added.

He elaborated that the new system will also help stimulate more interest in solar electricity among investors, government institutions and the general public.

Professor Chandra acknowledged the Government of the Republic of Korea through the Ambassador for

their generous support, assistance and commitment to research, and capacity building in environment, sustainable development and renewable energy in the region. He also thanked the Fiji Government for supporting the project. The Dean of the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment, Dr Anjeela Jokhan highlighted that a large percentage of the countries' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is spent on buying fossil fuel, which could be better spent on more important areas like education and health.

She pointed out that to reduce the import of fossil fuels the countries have agreed to invest in renewable energy power generation and to improve electricity access, which is currently very poor in most of the PICs.

"The completion of this project will see the first stage of our work in building capacity in our member countries. The next stage will be to continue to collect renewable energy data for longer term, help countries set up renewable energy systems and work on their efficiencies, and to train local people on the installation and maintenance of these systems," Dr Jokhan explained.

The commissioning of the new solar project was well attended by heads of government departments, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of the Korean Embassy and KOICA, University staff and students, and media personnel.



CZECH REPUBLIC DIPLOMAT VISITS USP

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (LTSS), Professor Susan Kelly (middle) with His Excellency, Dr Hynek Kmonicek (second from right) and his wife, Ms Indra Gumarova (far left). Also present during the Ambassador's visit: Dean of the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment, Dr Anjeela Jokhan, Acting Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics, Dr Kesaia Seniloli, and the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education, Dr Bruce Yeates.

The Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Fiji, His Excellency, Dr Hynek Kmonicek recently paid a courtesy call to the University of the South Pacific.

H.E. Dr Kmonicek who is based in Canberra, Australia, was in Fiji on an official visit from 1 - 5 February, 2012. He is a long serving diplomat and has also served twice as the Czech Republic's Deputy Foreign Minister.

With academic expertise ranging from political history to Islamic and Hebrew studies, H.E. Dr Kmonicek has lectured at a number of universities around the world.

During his visit to the Laucala Campus in Suva, H.E. Dr Kmonicek met with members of the University's Senior Management Team including the Deputy

Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching & Student Services), Professor Susan Kelly.

Welcoming H.E. Dr Kmonicek, Professor Kelly noted that the University was delighted by the Ambassador's visit. She said that as the premier institution of higher learning in the region, USP is keen to engage further with the broader international community in the key areas of learning, teaching and particularly, research; adding that USP already receives very valuable support from the EU.

H.E. Dr Kmonicek was enthusiastic about potential research and staff and student exchange partnerships between USP and universities in the Czech Republic. He listed renewable energy, tourism, climate change and language teaching as

some key areas for such partnerships.

The Ambassador agreed to work with USP to make contact with Czech universities, to explore mutual research interests and identify programmes that could be of interest to USP.

Professor Kelly thanked the Czech people for reaching out in this way, observing that USP students and staff would benefit greatly by collaborating with Czech universities, one of which, Charles University, is the second oldest in the world.

In addition to serving Fiji, H.E. Dr Kmonicek serves as Ambassador to other countries in the region including Australia, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu.

FORMAL WELCOME OF NEW USP STUDENTS

An official welcome programme of new students enrolled for the 2012 academic year was held at the University of the South Pacific's (USP) Laucala Campus in Suva on Friday, 17 February.

This formal welcome marked the end of a week-long Orientation Programme, which is held annually to ensure new students obtain all the necessary information as they embark on an exciting journey to study at USP.

The Orientation Week (O Week) is a platform for new students to get comfortable with the University's staff, familiarise themselves with its location and facilities, as well as get to know other local, regional, and international students, so that they have a smoother transition to University life.

The programme was facilitated by the University's Campus Life Office. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Services), Professor Susan Kelly began the programme by welcoming the invited guests which included the Chief Guest, First Secretary in the Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific, Mrs Annick Villarosa, members of the Diplomatic Corps, USP Senior Management Team and staff and new students.

In his official address, the Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Rajesh Chandra assured new students that USP will provide them with the best opportunity for high quality education to achieve "lifelong success."

"The first ingredient of success is sheer hard work and great achievement only comes from that so please work hard and your success will be assured. There are no shortcuts to hard work," Professor Chandra said.

"Universities are different from high school because you are treated as adults here with much greater independence and independent learning is the key to lifelong success," he added.

Professor Chandra shared the story of a 14-year old American boy who achieved great academic success and has recently written a book, and is about to graduate from a prominent university in the US. This was to motivate students to get serious with their education.

He reminded students not to lose focus and said, "you need to approach your university studies with total commitment, and the confidence that you have is everything that it will take to make you successful."

Professor Chandra stressed that learning is a partnership between students and the University. He highlighted that USP provides the best facilities, library resources, highly qualified academic staff with up-to-date teaching techniques, good classrooms, and all other support services that are essential for student success.

He encouraged students to always ask for assistance if they were unclear about something and also to take full advantage of USP's regional nature by mixing with students of other cultures to develop a real interest in cross-cultural interactions.

"You are all capable of great achievement at USP and in life," Professor Chandra said.

Professor Kelly said that, "successful students study hard, they make great friendship, develop social bonds with other people, eat well, have enough sleep, and make responsible decisions about sexual activity, alcohol use, drugs and avoid high risk behaviors."

She urged students to take good care of themselves, honor their hard work as well as their parents who are proud of their children making it to USP.



The Associate Dean of FALE, Dr Bruce Yeates, First Secretary of the Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific, Mrs Annick Villarosa, and the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra at the official welcome programme.

In her address, Mrs Villarosa pointed out that the welcome ceremony was the, "beginning of a time during which students will develop new capacities and skills and enhance their knowledge and expertise which will allow them to play a role in the future of the Pacific and their countries."

She reminded the students that being able to study at USP gives them the opportunity to meet with a variety of people from all over the Pacific, from different backgrounds, cultures and religions which is somehow as valuable as a "diploma."

Mrs Villarosa further thanked the University for the excellent work it is doing in Fiji and the region.

The programme was concluded by the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE), Dr Bruce Yeates, with a vote of thanks and a closing prayer.

Among the other activities, the first blood drive of 2012 was also held to kick start USP's efforts with its 'Give Back to the Community Program.'

Throughout the day, students got to enjoy live entertainment from cultural groups at the University, including the Oceania Dance Group, Masti Arts Group, and the Dragon Music band, and also won prizes.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTED AT ORIENTATION WEEK

One of the unique features about the University of the South Pacific's week-long orientation programme was the provision of bus tours and information on services provided by the Campus Life Office. This added value to the student experience.

The Orientation Week (O Week) not only provided students with essential information on their study options, programmes and a chance to meet lecturers, but it also provided advice about the real life circumstances and issues that they may encounter as a student.

Services provided by the Campus Life include counselling (psychological well-being), medical and fitness facilities, swimming pool, various group sports, on campus accommodation, food courts, security as well as other Campus Life events.

According to Campus Life Counsellor, Ms Asinate Savu-Korocowiri, one of the aims of the services and events provided by Campus Life is to help bring students, staff and their families together creating a USP community.

Bus tour guide coordinator, Mr Glen Vavaitamana said

that bus tours for regional and international students were very successful.

He added that having bus tours every afternoon during the O Week helped ensure students get familiarised with the location of important places for their general needs.

"We gave them advice on how to find their way around Suva where the USP Laucala Campus is situated," Mr Vavaitamana said.

The tour included visits around Suva City to places like the hospital, bus station, restaurants and cinemas.





UNIVERSITY WELCOMES STUDENTS WITH LIVE MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

The Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies (OCACPS) welcomed new students of the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE) with live musical performances by the renowned *Pasifika Voices* during the third day of the Orientation Week.

The new approach of using creative arts to make the orientation process more effective was led by the Head of Performing Arts at the University of the South Pacific (USP), Mr Igelese Ete.

The inspiring songs and performances by the *Pasifika Voices* team from the OCACPS kept the large number of students entertained and interested at the FALE orientation session.

According to Mr Ete, the idea was to inspire students to come and join USP in the field of creative arts.

"A lot of our Pacific students dance and sing and sometimes they think they can only do that at home

and think that they cannot study it like a formal discipline and this is one way to show them they can get serious with creative arts," he explained.

Mr Ete said that creative arts not only inspires students but also makes them feel at ease.

The session was opened by the Associate Dean of FALE, Dr Bruce Yeates who welcomed the new students to the University.

In his presentation, Dr Yeates introduced the students to the attributes of a graduate, the university learning outcomes and programme specific outcomes, and the credit points system which will occur in the degree restructure at USP.

Dr Yeates highlighted that students need to be aware of all the changes happening at the University, as these changes are the beginning of something new and exciting.

He shared a quote by TS Eliot, "What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from."

"So when we are making an end we are also making a beginning. This is something which is important for students to understand - that they are making a beginning even though they have ended something. Throughout their career this is what they are going to do and this is part of their life long journey of education," Dr Yeates explained.

He further elaborated that with the transitions going on at USP and the reforms in the curriculum, students can expect to see the dynamic changes in the coming years.

STUDENTS GET FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE OF UNIVERSITY LIFE

New students from Fiji and the Pacific region have begun to adapt well into the University environment during the week-long orientation programme hosted by the University of the South Pacific.

The Orientation Week (O Week) is one of the most important events in the University's academic calendar and students are strongly encouraged to actively participate and get up to date information and advice on courses, support services, as well as information on online and distance learning.

The University was very encouraged to see the large number of new students attending the orientation sessions as it places them in a better position to start their University life. Most students seem to be very determined and have one thing in common - to do well in passing their exams and graduate at the end of their studies.

A first year student from Kiribati, Save Redfern, said that she used the O Week to familiarize herself with getting around the University.

Originally from the atoll of Tarawa, Ms Redfern has enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts (BA) - Social Work, Management and Public Administration. She was impressed with the informative presentations during

orientation.

"At the moment, I am still trying to familiarize myself with the campus but I hope to do really well by the time I finish my studies here and also learn other Pacific cultures and languages," she said.

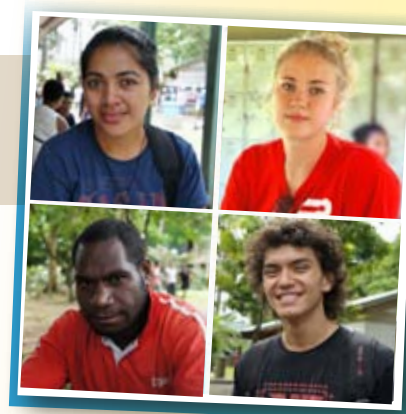
Similar sentiments were shared by many other students who participated in the O Week.

Sikadra Tovosia like Ms Redfern but who is from the Solomon Islands also shared her experience of coming for the first time to study at USP's Laucala campus.

Previously a student at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, she has enrolled in the Bachelor of Commerce and Law programme. Ms Tovosia is keen on mingling with students from different backgrounds and cultures.

Another student, Kinver Nicholls, from Fiji who took a gap year in 2011 has enrolled this year in the BA in Management and Tourism studies to further his academic qualification.

A former student of Marist Brother's High School in Suva, Mr Nicholls said he decided to work for a year after finishing high school before deciding to commit to studies at USP.



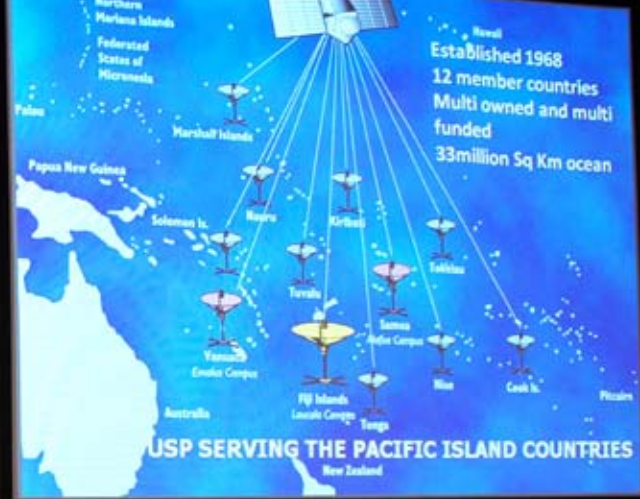
"I enjoyed the orientation programme. It was a good introduction to the University and I was able to learn a few things about the faculties" he said.

Mr Nicholls added that he was now ready to study at USP with high aspirations of passing his examinations and making new friends.

USP prepares students for lifelong success and this was aptly put by Malon Namak from Vanuatu. Mr Namak completed his foundation studies at the USP Emalus Campus and says that studying at the Laucala Campus will be a whole new experience for him.

"I hope to become more independent, disciplined and responsible while I study away from home at the USP Laucala Campus," added Mr Namak, who is enrolled in the Bachelor of Science programme in Computer Science and Information Systems.





INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ICTs AND OCEANIAN CULTURES

The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra gives his keynote address at the opening session of the international conference on ICTs and Oceanian Cultures.

The first-ever international conference in the world on the theme - Information and Communication Technologies and Oceanian Cultures was hosted by the University of the South Pacific.

The three-day conference which started on 22 February 2012, attracted renowned researchers, anthropologists, ICT experts, film makers, economists, and engineers and technical professionals from a wide range of industrial, governmental organisations as well as academic institutions.

It also marked the first event to be held at the new state-of-the-art Multi Purpose Theatre of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre located at the University's Laucala Campus in Suva.

The conference brought scholars and practitioners from all over the world particularly from Japan and the Pacific, together with staff and students of the University to share their knowledge, expertise, and good practices in ICT and the preservation of cultures, traditional knowledge, language, music and dance.

The keynote address at the opening session of the conference was delivered by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra. He presented on 'Fully leveraging ICTs for the Pacific: A knowledge hub at USP'.

In his presentation, Professor Chandra emphasised that the future of Pacific societies depends on the ability to harness opportunities and use ICTs effectively to protect cultures, to take advantage of the economic opportunities and to basically engage with the world global knowledge system in a way that is dignified and valuable for the Pacific islands.

While ICTs are important for everybody, Professor Chandra explained that it is especially important for Pacific Island Countries (PICs) because of its size, distance and isolation.

"ICT levels the field because suddenly no matter how small your country is, you can access the global market," he added.

Although there have been significant ICT developments in the Pacific such as in the area of e-commerce and e-governance, the Vice-Chancellor said that more needs to be done as infrastructure and market problems still exist.

"In ICT you cannot measure in years, you really have to look at how quickly everything changes so being responsive and realistic is of the essence. There are not too many demonstrators in the region, which is why USP is so valuable when it comes to demonstrating ICT excellence."

Professor Chandra went on to talk about the recent upgrades and new capabilities of the USPNet - a

satellite communications network connecting all 12 USP member countries.

During the conference, participants heard presentations by well known experts covering a range of topics and issues like the use of ICT in the preservation of cultures, knowledge, language, song and dance and stories; the use of ICT to further the promotion of knowledge using cultural and Pacific content; the use of ICT to create new creative industries and related policies and regulations. A number of panel discussions were also held during the conference.

Highlighting the prospects in ICTs and cultures, Professor Chandra pointed out that ICTs can be used to celebrate and share cultural and creative work and even to preserve cultures.

The Vice-Chancellor outlined plans by USP to make effective leveraging of ICTs. Some of these include establishing a centre for open educational and other resources and availing USPNet as a possible backbone of a disaster management network.

The conference coincided with Japan's commemoration of losses suffered in the devastating earthquakes and tsunami that struck Tohoku, Japan in March last year. A photo and illustrative exhibition was also held at the Multi Purpose Theatre to show the state of recovery and reconstruction in Japan after the natural disasters.



JAPANESE DIPLOMAT BID FAREWELL



The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra presents a farewell gift to the Japanese Ambassador, His Excellency, Mr Yukata Yoshizawa.

A farewell was hosted by the University of the South Pacific for the Japanese Ambassador to Fiji, His Excellency, Mr Yukata Yoshizawa at the Laucala Campus in Suva on 22 February, 2012.

The occasion was held in conjunction with the opening of the new Multi Purpose Theatre and the international conference on ICT and Oceanian Cultures. The Multi Purpose Theatre was built as Phase II of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre at USP.

The farewell was attended by members of the diplomatic corps, senior government officials, heads of international and regional organisations, staff and students of the University, members of the media and other distinguished guests.

H.E. Mr Yoshizawa served as Ambassador to Fiji since 2008 and during his term had greatly assisted and supported the development of the region. He also helped strengthen Japan's relationship with USP and its member countries.

Speaking at the farewell, the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra thanked H.E. Mr Yoshizawa for his

service to Fiji and to USP and more importantly for playing a significant role in facilitating the construction of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre.

The Japan-Pacific ICT Centre is a landmark building for the region and consists of fully-equipped computer laboratories, conference rooms, and a state-of-the-art Multi Purpose Theatre with a seating capacity of over 300 people.

Professor Chandra stressed that USP was grateful to H.E. Mr Yoshizawa for his strong support towards USP and the region and said the contribution he made was "invaluable."

"I hope that H.E. Mr Yoshizawa has also enjoyed his association with the University and its staff and we hope that he goes with good memory of USP, Fiji and the communities that he represented. USP has gained a lot of support from his leadership and we look forward to further collaboration with Japan," Professor Chandra added.

Apart from Fiji, H.E. Mr Yoshizawa also served as ambassador to Kiribati, Nauru, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. His next posting is in Pretoria, South Africa.

UNIVERSITY RAISES FUNDS TO HELP VICTIMS OF NATURAL DISASTERS

The University of the South Pacific successfully hosted a fundraising dinner on 23 February 2012, to help support victims of natural disasters in Japan, New Zealand and Fiji

The 'USPHope' fundraising dinner which was held at the Oceania Centre was well attended by the University community including members of the diplomatic corps, heads of international and regional organisations, representatives from the public and private sectors as well as other distinguished guests.

In thanking those who had bought dinner tickets to support the initiative, the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra on behalf of the University expressed his sincere gratitude for the kind gesture.

He assured those present that their contribution will go a long way in helping those that have been affected by the natural disasters.

Japan suffered devastating earthquakes and tsunami in March last year while people in Christchurch, New Zealand witnessed one of its worst earthquakes in February the same year.

Professor Chandra said that the University felt the need to assist in some way so three students from Christchurch and two from Japan have been sponsored to study at USP.

"Universities are privileged places and I think that showing compassion and humanity is a very important part of what we should be doing. I am very pleased that USP has taken this step," he mentioned.

He added that the initiative was a small token to reciprocate the generosity that is often shown by neighbours, Japan and New Zealand in times of need during natural disasters in Fiji.

LATEST JOURNAL OF PACIFIC STUDIES LOOKS AT PEACE-BUILDING

The University of the South Pacific has published a special themed edition of the Journal of Pacific Studies (JPacS) focusing on peace and conflict.

Edited by Mr Shailendra Singh and Dr Desmond Amosa, the journal has attracted papers exploring conflict prevention and peace-building from the political, education, arts, media, gender and civil society perspectives.

Mr Singh is the former head of USP journalism currently studying for a PhD at the University of Queensland. Dr Amosa, also a former USP academic, is now the Dean for the Faculty of Business and Entrepreneurship at the National University of Samoa.

This special issue is a collaboration between the University's Faculty of Business and Economics and the UNDP Pacific Centre. The aim is to focus attention and stimulate research on conflicts in the region, looking at possible prevention and peace-building initiatives.

The peer-reviewed journal has received papers from authors based at the Auckland University of Technology, the University of Otago, the University of Queensland, the University of Sydney and the University of the South Pacific.

An editorial in the journal notes that while the Pacific region is regarded as peaceful compared to other parts of the world, conflicts are on the rise.

The four coups in Fiji between 1987 and 2006, the riots in Tonga in 2006, ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands in the late 90s, sporadic tribal fighting in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and rumblings in New Caledonia exemplify the nature of conflicts in our region, which is 'Pacific' by name but not always so by nature, the editorial said.

It further comments that the Pacific has its own strong, if sometimes dormant, mechanisms for keeping peace. These traditional mechanisms are culturally entrenched, valued and respected; hence they should be studied and explored.

Finally, this issue also examines the role of the media in building a peaceful region. Peace journalism, a relatively new concept, is discussed as a potential way forward.



Editors of JPacS, Mr Shailendra Singh (far right) and Dr Desmond Amosa (far left) with three contributors to the latest issue of the journal, Dr Levi Obijiofor, Mr Kalafi Moala and Dr David Robie.

Vaka: The Birth of a Seer



Photo: Naoki Takyo

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can enhance and help in the perpetuation of Oceanian cultures.

These were the words of Professor Vilsoni Hereniko as he defined the underlying theme of the new and remarkable cultural performance titled '*Vaka: The Birth of a Seer*'.

The new production was held in conjunction with the opening of the new Multi Purpose Theatre of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre as well as the first-ever international conference on ICTs and Oceanian Cultures.

Vaka was the brainchild of a growing number of world-class artists from the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies (OCACPS) at the University of the South Pacific.

Professor Hereniko, Director of OCACPS and a renowned scholar, playwright and filmmaker, was the executive producer and adviser on this production.

Together with him, two of the region's most talented artists were at the centre of this extravaganza. Mr Peter Espiritu, the Artistic Director and Mr Iglese Ete, Head of Performing Arts, both from OCACPS, played the roles of director/writer/choreographer and musical director respectively.

According to Professor Hereniko, the synergy among all these talents is what made the show such a success.

Inspired by migration myth and legend as well as the *Vaka Drua* (double-hull canoe) culture and its associated beliefs and practices, this Oceanian music-dance-drama lived up to its hype as it turned out to be one of the most spectacular shows ever witnessed in the region.

It received an overwhelming response from those that watched one of its showings

on 22nd, 24th and 25th of February 2012 at the newly opened Multi Purpose Theatre at the University's Laucala Campus in Suva.

Boasting of a cast of about 70 singers, dancers and actors, the poetic story of *Vaka* integrates 21st century technology with Oceanian traditions.

The performance is made up of eight scenes which depict the life of the character, *Manoa*, a young visionary who is born blind but leads his people to respect their ancestral land and wisdom and the oceans that nourish them.

When *Manoa* is born, the Gods order the people to protect him and to build a *Vaka Drua*. This does not settle well with *Ratu*, the village oracle who is envious of *Manoa's* charisma and curses him to death. Throughout the story, *Ratu* pursues *Manoa* with various strategies to harm him.

The show took about three months to prepare and cost about F\$87 000. These costs were met by USP and the Embassy of the United States (US).

Professor Hereniko thanked the cast members and crew for the hard work and dedication they put into the rehearsals that culminated in three standing-room-only performances of *Vaka*. He also acknowledged the significant financial support by the Vice Chancellor, the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education, the Oceania Centre, and the Embassy of the United States.

Professor Hereniko said that there are two productions that mirror the double-hull canoe. Now that *Vaka: The Birth of a Seer* is over, auditions will soon begin on the next production titled *Vaka: The Wave of Fire*, which is expected to be staged later this year and also shown at the Festival of Pacific Arts at the Solomon Islands in July, 2012.

STUDENT PROFILE | EMELI CHARLENE MANI | BSc - BIOLOGY/CHEMISTRY



What is your home country?

Fiji.

Which Campus are you studying at?

Laucala Campus.

Why do you choose to study at USP?

To get top class education at an internationally renowned institute.

What do you enjoy about "UNI" life?

Everything because every day is a new experience.

What do you find most difficult or challenging?

Completing assignments on time.

What do you like about your program of study?

Working in the labs and fieldtrips.

What can't you live without on Campus?

My phone, food and friends.

What could improve your studying experience at USP?

More computer labs for doing research work on assignments.

What is your best survival tip?

Manage your time wisely and do anything to the best of your abilities.

What do you do to relax when you're not studying?

Hang out with my friends.

What makes a good lecturer?

Someone who is able to use creative approaches to teach a concept easily and is very helpful.

Who is your role model or mentor?

My mother.

What Career(s) will your course prepare you for?

Research assistant, lab technician or a teacher.

What are some challenges facing young people in the Pacific?

Climate change, mental health, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, and reproductive health.

What are your hopes for the Pacific in 2012 and beyond?

For Pacific people to get empowered on issues that affect the region and also for youths to be heard and have greater influence in addressing policies affecting young people.