

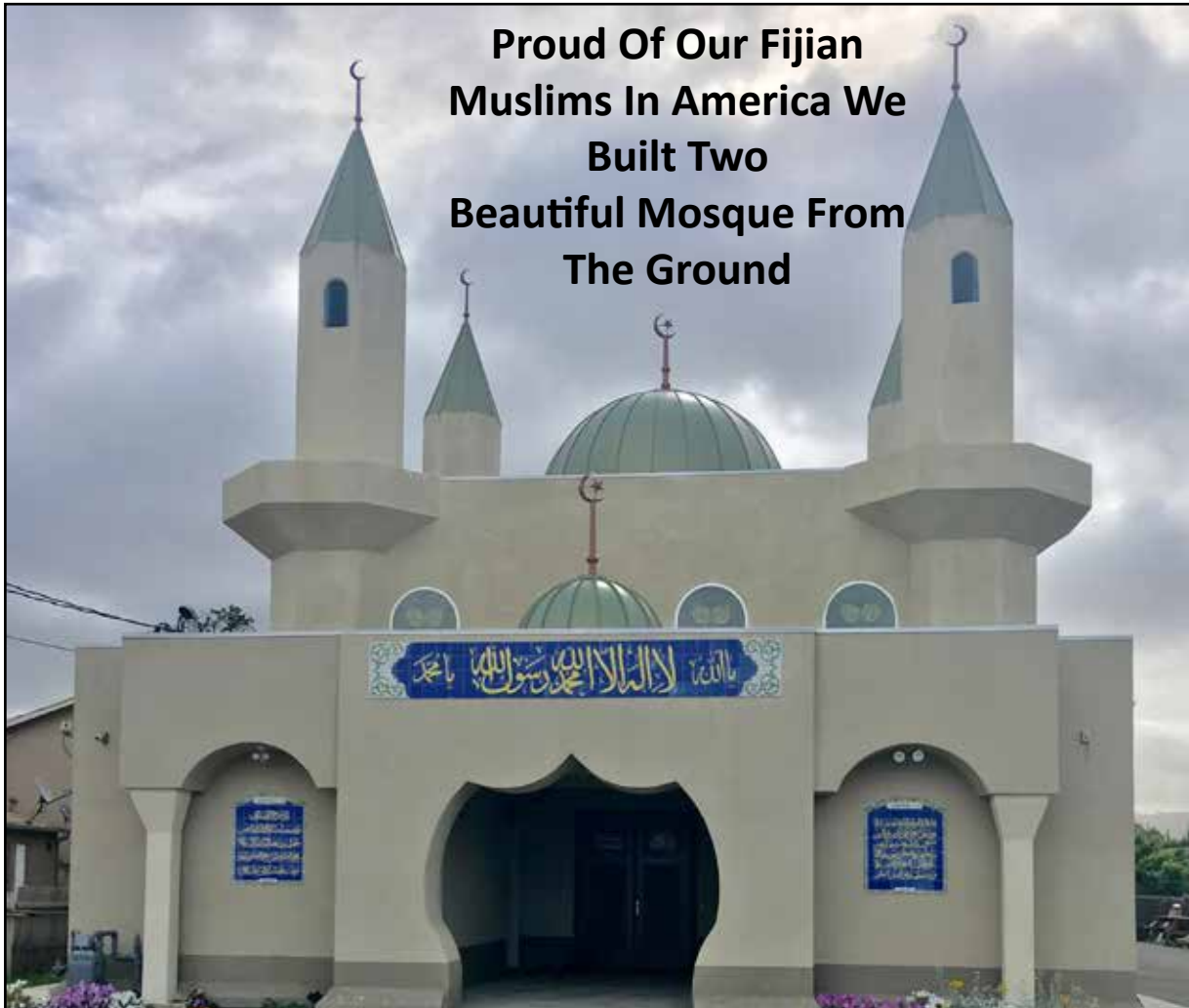


THE US FIJI TIMES

World's Largest Fiji Newspaper Out Of Republic of Fiji

April 2023 Monthly Publication - Subscription Available Pages 56 Volume: 222

Looking to Mecca from Hayward, CA



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Muslims In America We
Built Two
Beautiful Mosque From
The Ground

Eid Mubarak To All

The second Fiji Mosque,
(Built in 2020 Hayward , CA)

Gading Jame Masjid
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Established in 2004, Gading Jame Masjid is one of the the largest multi-purpose built Mosques in Hayward, California. We believe that our primary role is to serve the needs of the local community and to work towards the common good. Our strong partnerships with the American Muslim Association and other faith groups and many others have helped us to contribute towards improvements within the local community. This builds on the very essence of our Mosque: a coming together of distinguished Muslims and non-Muslims to create a cohesive and tolerant society.

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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
VILIAME GAVOKA

THE US FIJI TIMES PROUD OF ITS SERVICE

The US Fiji Times is ranked as the top newspaper being published outside of Fiji for the Fiji American community and to all over the world.

The paper's popularity has grown immensely in recent years due to its critical approach in impressing the need for charitable organizations to rise up in all occasions to help Fiji and the people back home. Visitors from around the world have commended the paper on its stand to serve the community. The US Fiji Times understands that like in any other field, there is competition and competing with "The largest newspaper out of Fiji" has been a difficult task for newer publications. This is not because of its magnitude and coverage, but because of its stability and growth

capabilities.

The writers of the paper comprise some of Fiji's best. Even though they are not too visible in social functions, they are taking up their challenges very effectively. The marketing strategy handles by our CEO/Publisher Mr. Rocky Ali is the hallmark of the papers current strength. Despite lacking the front line journalist experience, he makes up for the deficiency with the sheer ability to jeep the media wagon rolling.

His insatiable love to be involved with the community to cherish in this very noble cause is worthy of higher recommendation. We have a very vibrant community, so despite the paper being issued free, the expectation of the

community is very high. The coverage of all the major events is a mist for the paper and we feel very proud to be associated with major organizations to see that their events are properly covered with pictures, stories and awareness via our social media platforms.

The paper is being also sent to countries like Fiji, NZ, Australia, Canada, England and Sweden for Fijians abroad to also get the feel of the luxuries of USA. The feedback has been overwhelming in this regard and it has become a trend for many organizations to rely on US Fiji Times in reaching the desired success with adequate coverage.

The paper will strive to serve the community with the best of its ability and assures the community that there will be quality reporting at all times. Vinaka – Rocky Buksh

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EDITORIAL

Fiji Government Must Act Fast to Face Changing Global Geopolitical Dynamics

Jayant Singh, Riverbank CA

Fiji's Coalition government is now in its fourth month of governance. We are still seeing signs of being dwelling in the past over policies and spending of the past government. It is inevitable that the governing process has to comprehend the current financial status of the nation and necessary steps has to be taken to continue the services expected of a fresh new

government.

Whatever situation that currently is putting difficulties to deliver the promises, has to be navigated and appropriate plans has to be made to stride the nation forward with the same attitude that had instigated the change prophesized.

Most importantly, we have to be prepared to face the changes expected to come by on the

global geopolitical arena with rapid shift on alliances and foreign policies of key global players. The effect of this new shift to find the best combination to drive one's foreign policy best will have an impact on those who are dependent on these global giants and how their policies align to the global initiatives on peace and trade.

The Fiji government must

set its priorities right in order to get the best out of what is being played out there and start working towards facing up to any challenges it may pose as being a recipient of grant etc. from these power brokers.

Therefore, time is over to fight in-house as the future is now dependent of how best we are seen as partners to the world outside.

Hope the government has its radar the right people in the likes of India's Foreign Minister Dr. Jaishankar that can deliver, as we will be tested sooner or later on our position on some of pressing global issues through which we can surely find some major relief on our financial, trade and tourism area; just to name a few.

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 Eid Mubarak

Bobby Naicker
Honorary Consul of Fiji,
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This Eid we take time to reflect on the suffering around us and pray for those that have been affected by natural disasters and the war. Our prayers go out to those affected by the war in Ukraine, the victims of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria and all the others who have suffered in one way or another. At the same time, we need to be thankful for all the good that has happened in the world this past year when strangers have gotten together to help those in need. We take a moment to congratulate Honourable Sitiveni Rabuka and his newly formed government and pray that they guide our beloved Country and its citizens to continue to excel. Eid is the greatest festival for

the Muslim people. May the delight and the moments measure all the special joys for all of you to treasure. May the magic of this Eid bring lots of happiness in your life. May you celebrate it with close friends and families and may your hearts be filled with love and joy. This festival marks the end of Ramadan. Ramadan being the holy month of fasting. The festival of Eid is celebrated the day after the fast ends. I have fond memories from when I was a young man in Fiji and then growing up in Canada of what the celebrations meant to my Muslim friends. They would get up early in the morning. They would take a bath and put on their best clothes. This is followed

by a ritual where they took part in decorating their homes. My friends and their families would embrace each other, me and my family, and we would exchange Eid greetings. "Eid Mubarak" was on the lips of all the Muslims during this celebration. I remember going to their houses for a celebration of great food, companionship, and sweets. Eid is celebrated by people of all cultures. Fijians of all designation whether they are Hindus, Muslims or Christians celebrate Eid with the same passion and unity. The celebration of Eid promotes national integration and the feeling of brotherhood. It is a festival of love and goodwill. It gives us a message

to love all and hate none. It teaches us to embrace all men and women as brothers and sisters. May this Eid bring you good health. Please take time to acknowledge those in need either within our community or back in Fiji. This is an especially difficult time for our people in Fiji. The pandemic has crippled our tourism-based economy and any help from abroad will be very much appreciated. This is a special celebration for the poor and for the wealthy. This is one day that wealth does not matter so let us try to see that every Muslim gets to celebrate Eid to the fullest.


 Eid Mubarak

STATEMENT BY
Narendra Narayan
President, America Fiji Sports Commission
& America Fiji Golf Club



Message from Narendra Narayan
 I am pleased to send you my warm greetings and best wishes on the auspicious occasion of Eid. The Holy Month of Ramadan carries the message of self-restraint, sacrifice, love, kindness and deep reverence and abiding faith in the Creator. The Eid festival, which marks the end of the

holy month of Ramadan, is a great day of happiness and joy for Muslims. But it also has important religious and spiritual significance. It is a time for giving and sharing and introspection about our existence as human beings. In a world caught up in disputes, selfishness and inequalities, the message of the Holy Month of Ramadan

and Eid reminds us of our temporal existence, the interdependence of all people and the duty placed on us to respect all beings and care for the less fortunate and needy people in our society. May the spirit and essence of the Eid Festivities touch all hearts and bring joy and peace to everyone. To our Muslim brothers and

sisters and friends, we wish you abundant joy, happiness and prosperity in your lives!
 Eid Mubarak!
 Narendra Narayan


Eid Mubarak

**Message from
Jay Singh
Hon Consul, Fiji
San Francisco - USA**



I greet our Fijian Community and friends here in the USA , Fiji and abroad , especially our Muslim Community , with a Joyous Eid. I hope this auspicious day marks the perfect occasion to rejoice in happiness together and tighten the bond of our families. Let the celebration remind us of a sense of responsibility and bring people in harmony . Cherish every moment of this beautiful festival, and may the grace of faith bring days of happiness, weeks of prosperity, months of pure contentment, and hearts filled with love and peace. Eid Mubarak!


Eid Mubarak

**Message From
Rocky Buksh
CEO / Publisher
US Fiji Times**



I would like to extend my hearty greeting to all the sponsors and readers on this Years Ramzan and Eid. This period reminds me of the wonderful ways Eid is celebrated in Fiji. This is by far the most looked religious enactment for all our fellow brothers and sisters of Islam. Family gathering and tea sessions are held with neighbors, families and friends. The business communities in taking full advantage of the heavy pockets provides all that goodies to see that every festive season become a memorable one. The USFijiTimes in serving the community shares the feeling we are accustomed to. Naturally we Fijians have a totally different way in bonding with each other when it comes to sharing and enjoying religious festivals. Our feelings and flashbacks send us back to our mood irrespective of our current habitat. So let us feel free to enjoy this wonderful occasion with friends and families and not to forget to send our share of love and gifts to our families back home and to donate generously to the needy so that we feel the blessings of the almighty during this happy period also. It is hope that in seeing this paper you do have get a true feeling of Fiji style celebration being carried out at your back yard and send us pictures to give it memorable make over with the compliments of your largest abroad Fiji- THE US FIJI TIMES. On behalf of the Executive staff and all reporters I would like to extend a very Happy Ramzan and Eid to all our reads here and all over the world.



Eid Mubarak from Mr & Mrs Pramesh Sharma

Eid bring the message of peace , love and happiness.
I would like to wish everyone a very joyful EID. The kids and elders look forward to this very great occasion when everyone gets together to show the gratitude to the all mighty for giving a wonderful world to thank him for everything.
My best wishes to the sick and those not so privileged so that their life gets better and the god gives them strength for a great life as well.
May you all enjoy this great day.

***Shameer Buksh
President - FMSA OF USA***

Assalamualikum WRB to you all,



EID Mubarak, I want to take a moment to extend my warmest wishes to all those who are celebrating this joyous occasion around the world. Eid al-Fitr is a time of reflection, gratitude, and celebration. It marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, a period of spiritual renewal and self-discipline for Muslims worldwide. It is a time to come together with family and friends, share delicious food, exchange gifts, and pray for peace, love, and unity. On this special occasion, may Allah accept all your good deeds, forgive your sins, and grant you peace, happiness, and prosperity. May your heart be filled with joy, your home with love, and your life with blessings. May your Eid be a source of strength and inspiration, and may it bring you closer to Allah and to each other.

Let us also remember those who are less fortunate and in need of our help and support, especially during these challenging times. Let us share our blessings with them and show kindness and compassion to all. Once again, Eid Mubarak to you and your loved ones. May Allah bless you with good health, happiness, and success in all your endeavors.

Eid Mubarak

Eid Message From Haji Mohammed Iqbal Khan



Haji Mohammed Iqbal Khan

As we start the blessed month of Ramadan we pray for peace and harmony around the globe. On behalf of my team members at American Muslim Association ('AMA'), I would like to take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt Ramadan Mubarak to the entire community and to all fasting brothers and sisters around the world. As you are reading this article Ramadan has already started and really looking forward to having an amazing atmosphere all around the globe. The beauty of this month is the blessings are in abundance. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and fasting is one of the fundamental pillars in Islam. During this auspicious month, capable Muslims are mandated to keep their fast from sunrise to sunset. The

month of Ramadan is a time for spiritual reflection, prayer, increasing our good deeds, and spending time with family and friends. The fasting is intended to help teach Muslims self-discipline, self-restraint, and generosity. It is the month to appreciate all the blessings our Creator Allah Subhana Hu Wa Ta'ala has bestowed upon us and it also reminds us of the suffering of the poor, who may rarely get to eat well. Charity (Zakat) giving is another one of the 5 pillars in Islam and the reward for giving charity is increased in the month of Ramadan. A person who has the wealth is required to give charity of 2.5% to the family members or any Muslim brothers or sisters who are not as fortunate. Rewards for any good deeds done during the month of Ramadan are multiplied by seventy at the minimum but there is no limit to what Allah Subhana Hu Wa Ta'ala rewards. Let's pray for all brothers and sisters who have departed this world before us that may Allah Subhana Hu Wa Ta'ala be pleased with them and grant them all the highest level in

paradise, not forgetting our brothers and sisters in Turkey and Syria who were martyred in the recent earthquake may Allah Subhana Hu Wa Ta'ala increase their status. Many brother and sister were injured in the earthquake, may Allah Subhana Hu Wa Ta'ala give them quick healing and those who lost their homes may Allah Subhana Hu Wa Ta'ala provide them with a new and better house... Ameen! With the help of our community our Welfare team was able to raise more than \$10,000 to help our brothers and sisters who were impacted by the devastating earthquake. Gading Jame Masjid is having Iftaar daily, and Taraweeh prayers. As in previous year, we are planning to complete the Quran in Taraweeh, Insha Allah! As the saying goes, time goes by very fast...this Ramadan will also fly by, please don't lose the opportunity to be at your local Masjid for daily and Taraweeh prayers, and iftar with the community. This is the month to share and care, contribute what you can! American Muslim Association provides suite of services to its

community members. Gading Masjid offers 5 daily prayers, Friday Jumma prayers, and a facility that provides for Islamic functions such as weddings, funerals services, prayer gatherings.. etc. Every Monday we have Quran Tafseer, Every Thursday we have Halqa-e-Zikar and every Friday we have adult classes. AMA Education team is relaunching the education program that was halted during the move to the new Masjid and reopening was further delayed due to the pandemic. The team is energized and putting plans to start the classes after Ramadan, on May 1st. Registration has already started, please reach out to our AMA Education team to register your child for the Islamic Classes. I would like to conclude by praying that may we end this blessed month of Ramadan with peace, harmony, happiness, and with a great celebration of Eid-ul Fitr. "Dunya Se Dil Laga Kar Dunya Se Kiya Milega Yade Khuda Kiyeja Tuj Ko Khuda Milega"

A Greeting Poem for Ramadan, the Blessed Month

*Marhaba, Marhaba, Marhaba
Oh Ramadan! the month of blessing, the month that all Muslims are anxiously awaiting to fast, the month that elevates the faith of Muslims, the month that brings good and bad Muslims together, the month in which Qur'an is recited more than all the other months combined, Oh the loving Ramadan, here you are with us again, the month of piety in which all doubtful hobbies are avoided, Oh Ramadan, Marhaban, Marhaba, Marhaba! the only month that has a Night of Power, the only month in which Angels descend in troops, the month in which the poor and the rich get their past sins forgiven, Oh Ramadan, the lessons you taught us will not be forgotten, Oh Ramadan, we look forward to seeing more of you in fettle. Marhaba, Marhaba, Marhaba Oh Ramadan!*

Eid Mubarak

Asaf Ali



February 4 th. 2023 will go in the history of Fiji Muslim Sports Association as a day of celebration. For 3 long years our Association was split up into 2 factions, each claiming to be the legitimate body representing Muslims in California. Nobody was making any effort to unite these bodies.

Master Asaf Ali took this initiative about 6 months ago and convinced both sides that it was in the interest of our younger generation and keeping in mind the importance in Islam about unity that both sides met in an historic meeting in Tracy, California and good sportsmanship was shown by both sides and we agreed on being united. I would like to thank Mukhtar Buksh, Shameer Buksh and Java

Saheb for their efforts in bringing these 2 sides together. This unity has resulted in the Association having 8 teams and strengthens our All Star team to a very competitive level. Let us all pray that we stay united.

Asaf Ali

News

Ram 'very proud'

Miss Fiji and 2023 Teen Face of Beauty International (FOBI) first runner-up Gitali Ram hopes to bring the Miss Universe crown to Fiji in the future.

The 18-year-old former Xavier College student competed against contestants from 27 countries in the teen FOBI pageant held in the Philippines recently.

"I am very proud because Fiji has been taking part in beauty pageants for 44 years and I am

the first ever to get an international title and also make it to the top three," she said.

Ms Ram said for two weeks, apart from participating in various rounds of the competition, she witnessed firsthand how underprivileged students struggled to get a decent education in the Philippines.

The Votualevu, Nadi, teen encouraged young girls to always believe in themselves and to never stop dreaming. "Keep

working hard and do not let anyone cut your wings.

"I want to acknowledge my parents and to all those who supported me and kept motivating me throughout my journey," she said.

Miss Myanmar Kendra Erica was crowned the winner in the competition while Miss Samoa finished as second runner-up.



Roza Iftar@ American Muslim Association Hayward Jame Masjid (Gading Mosque)



Fiji Mosque in San Francisco Another Day of Fasting.

I love the month of RAMADAN I got to Fast, Pray, Meet, Talk about Religion, With my Brothers & Sisters.

According to the Islamic faithful, the Quran being revealed to Muhammad for the first time during the month of Ramadan is the origination of this holiday. It is worshiped throughout the world on the 9th, and hottest, month of the Islamic calendar, and is seen as one of the Five Pillars of Islam. It is a worship of a holiday that lasts 29 or 30 days and its major event is that of fasting.



Eid

Eid-ul-Fitr: 5 unique Eid traditions that are followed around the world

Eid-ul-Fitr, across the globe, is about spending time with family and friends. This festival, however, is celebrated in different ways in various parts of the world. Read on to find out the specific traditions that are followed in different regions. Eid-ul-Fitr, which translates to "festival of breaking the fast" is a time of rejoicing with family and friends. It's a blissful celebration that marks the end of the holy month of Ramzan when millions of Muslims enthusiastically wait for the new moon sighting to be confirmed, to celebrate the end of their fasting journey. Muslims around the world mark the day by taking part in a host of activities. Depending on where you are, the festival may have a more localised name. In Turkic countries, it is often referred to as Bayram, whereas some North African cultures refer to it as Eid Seghir or the little Eid. Under usual circumstances, the day starts with prayers, and a big meal is usually the main event, but there are lots of ways and traditions by which people celebrate the special occasion. The process of ghusl, morning prayers, zakat al-Fitr, and visiting is common practice for Muslims

everywhere. Apart from these practices, unique traditions and customs are present amongst individual Muslim communities all around the world. From Turkey to Iceland, check out some Eid traditions around the world that differ by region but encompass the same feelings of joy across the globe: Turkey In Turkey, Eid-ul-Fitr is known as Ramazan Bayrami (Ramadan festival) or Seker Bayrami (festivals of sweets). People wear their new clothes referred to as bayramlik and wish each other Bayraminiz Mubarek Olsun that translates to 'May your Bayram (Eid) be blessed'. It is a public holiday, where government offices and schools are generally closed for the whole three-day period of the festivities. It is of utmost importance to honour elderly citizens by kissing their right hand and placing it on one's forehead all the while conveying the Bayram greetings. It is also important for young children to go from door to door around their neighbourhood, wishing everyone a "Happy Bayram," for which they are rewarded with candy, traditional sweets such as baklava and Turkish Delight, chocolates, or a small amount of



money at every door, similar to

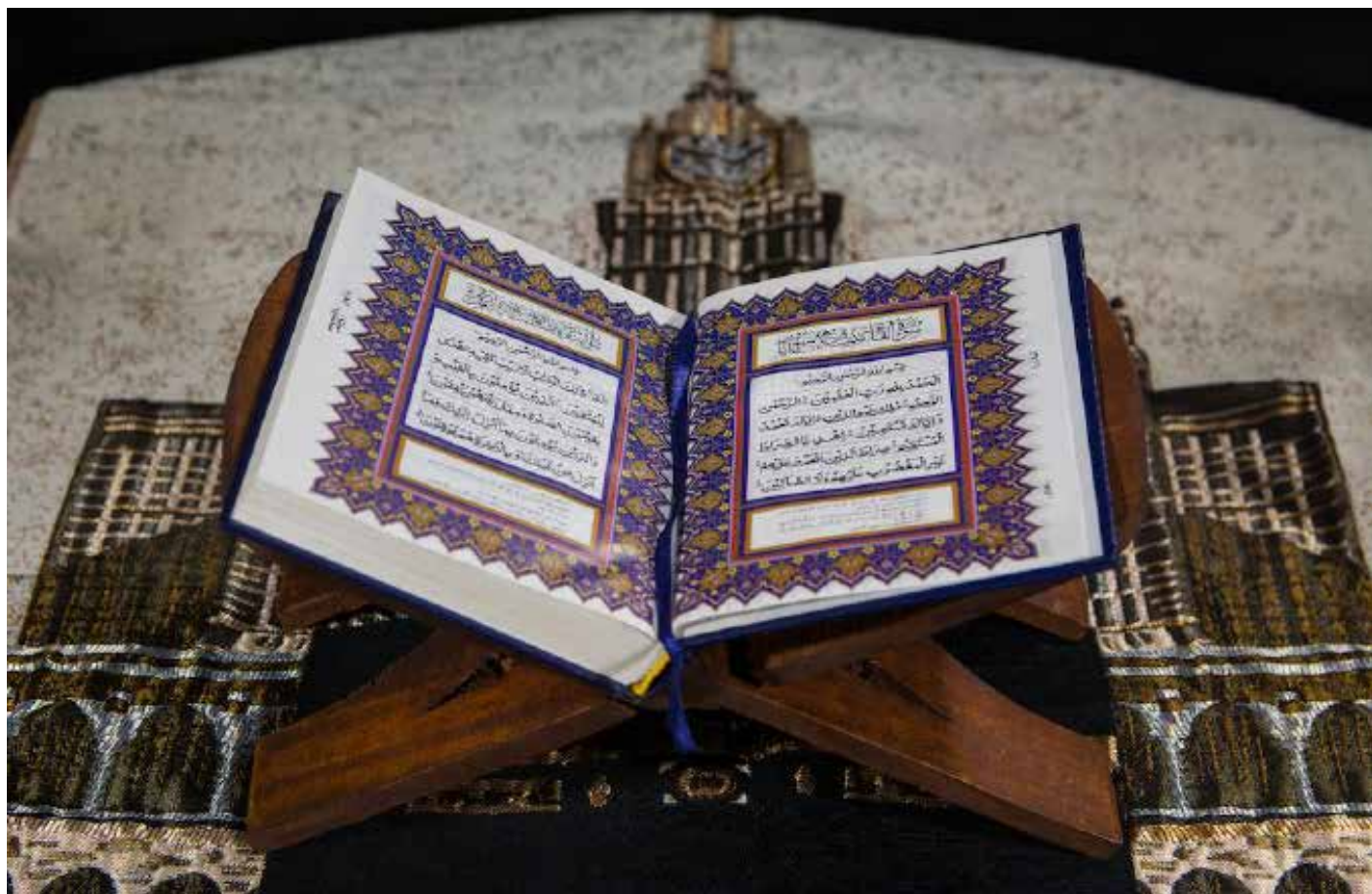
the custom of Halloween in the United States. Indonesia Eid-ul-Fitr is locally known as Lebaran in Indonesia and it is the most important holiday for Indonesians. Similar to other Muslim nations, Indonesians also celebrate with prayers, gatherings, and family reunions. One of the foremost traditions is Mudik (homecoming) where those who leave their hometowns to work in the big cities travel back to their places to spend Eid with their families. A ritual called the Halal Bihalal is also performed during or after Eid which involves seeking forgiveness from everyone including friends, colleagues, neighbours, and relatives. Kids are gifted with colourful envelopes of money by their elders when they visit

them. Most Indonesian Muslims wear cultural clothing on Eid day, differing for both men and women in style. Relatives also visit graves of their loved ones during the festival of Eid. Malaysia Eid in Malaysia is a joyous occasion like anywhere else, and most people travel to their hometowns to be with their families. People decorate their homes with oil lamps known as Pelita and cook traditional foods for Eid, including Ketupat or rice dumplings, and Rendang, a popular meat dish to honour guests in South East Asian countries. Locally known as Hari Raya Aidilfitri, meaning the celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr, it is a day when traditional dresses are worn by all.

Eid

Eid-ul-Fitr: 5 unique Eid traditions that are followed around the world

Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations have always been like an open house in Malaysia, with everyone being welcomed in every home and an open door festive atmosphere that greets people to enjoy the meals and have a good time, without differentiating between them based on economic status, religion, or caste. Families usually take turns in opening their homes to guests for the day. Africa African countries such as Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Somalia, South Africa, Nigeria, and several others, celebrate Eid in a similar fashion with prayers in the morning at the local mosques before the grand family get-together, where local food items play a dominant role. In Morocco, traditional dresses are worn by men and women, and Moroccan pancakes are a breakfast staple, along with their famous mint tea, while in Somalia, Halvo is the dessert of the day. In Mombasa, Muslims



mark the last ten days of Ramzan (known as Kumi la mwisho) with street festivals and socialising. The festival, which is open in the evening when the daily fast ends, offer people a chance to buy presents for friends and family. Storytellers also roam the streets in some places during Eid, entertaining kids with folktales. Iceland Leading up to the celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr, Muslims in Iceland also partake in the dusk-to-dawn fast during Ramzan. In the peak of summer, the sun remains up in the sky for a longer time than usual, the sun setting at midnight and returning two hours later. This means that Muslims living in Iceland are required to fast up to 22 hours a day. While this sounds like a very challenging feat, Islamic scholars and experts have offered an alternative to those who live in the land of the midnight sun. Icelandic Muslims can choose to break their fast based on the timings of sunrise and sunset from the nearest country or observe Saudi Arabia's timezone. The auspicious day is celebrated in one

of the few mosques in Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland. Guests who visit the mosque come armed with an international buffet of mouth-watering foods, including foods from Indonesian, Egyptian and Eritrean cuisines to celebrate this holy and joyous occasion. Much to the delight of the children, the little ones wear their best clothes and exchange gifts with fellow friends and family members. The whole idea of the festival is that whoever you meet, you try and create a feeling of goodwill with them. Any feeling of animosity is put aside, at least for one day. While there are lots of things that everyone will do on Eid, with approximately 2 billion Muslims across the globe, it's not surprising that people can have some different ways of celebrating this holy festival. Most Muslims celebrate Eid in the same traditional sense but of course, cultural traditions and practices for the occasion differ from East to West and from one country to another.

World News

Our Wonderful Differences Enriches Societies

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Mar 31 (IPS) - On the occasion of World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April 2023, IPS is republishing 'When Is Too Much Autism Awareness Still Not Enough?' When is too much Autism awareness still not enough? This thought recurs every April as we near World Autism Day on April 2, and parents reach out to me after reading enthusiastic and well-meaning news and journal articles – which are actually harmful and hurtful. In 2008, along with a few dedicated parents and professionals, we began our effort to raise awareness around Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). We eventually came together to form an advocacy, capacity-building, and research-based not-for-profit organization (Shuchona Foundation) established in 2014. Today, we feel our work in Bangladesh, through effective national and international partnerships with equally dedicated parents and professionals, has impacted the country.

Professional training, extensive awareness activities, and inclusion in social situations are demonstrable. The best part is that parents no longer view themselves as victims punished by fate for having a child with a disability. Despite all the efforts in educating people in the many sectors of our country, including the formulation of a detailed National Strategic Plan, it is shocking to still find blatant disregard for the truth. I have, therefore, requested a parent, a former Shuchona Foundation head of operations and now a member of our executive board, to share her thoughts. Nothing

speaks the truth louder and stronger than the person who has been on the receiving end of the discriminatory, hurtful, and unethical behaviour than the parent who hears it over and over again. Here below excerpts of what I learned from Zain Bari Rizvi. If I had a Taka (Bangladesh currency) for each time someone said: 'But he looks so normal,' when I share that my son is on the Autism Spectrum, I would have been able to take early retirement at a villa in the Maldives! I do not blame these mostly well-meaning people and their lack of awareness when widely read, and circulated dailies choose to use photos of children with Downs Syndrome to illustrate what children with Autism look like.

Autistic traits cannot be captured with a still photograph, and most individuals with ASD look just like any other typical peer. This sort of misrepresentation is not innocent and borders on dangerously harmful. Deliberately associating a congenital genetic condition with a neurodevelopmental one will confuse the readers into thinking they are the same. This may also prevent parents and caregivers of children with Autism from seeking early intervention services that could potentially improve outcomes because they will have the false sense of comfort that their child 'looks normal', aka neurotypical. There is no one true face of Autism because it is a not-one-size-fits-all spectrum disorder. It stays true to this famous quote by an Autism Advocate and Autistic person, Dr Stephen Shore: "If you've met one individual with autism,

you've met one individual with autism." I am not a psychologist nor an expert, but as a parent who had the privilege to be educated and used my spare time and resources to do research, this incorrect and harmful visual misrepresentation enrages and upsets me. Bangladesh has made considerable strides in Autism advocacy and policy changes due to extraordinary efforts by the leadership team at Shuchona Foundation. The Foundation has selflessly spearheaded the job of educating and opening the minds and hearts of people about what it entails to be on the Autism Spectrum. Because of their single minded dedication to this cause, we, in Bangladesh, are finally having a discourse on what Autism is and acknowledge and accept the differences in our children with Autism.

We also have access to world-class services like early interventions such as ABA therapy and parent/caregiver engagement without shame or guilt. And if there is one thing I learnt working closely with Shuchona Foundation, the key to making a difference is "to acknowledge that people will not always get it right but to look out for whether they want to learn to make it right".

As World Autism Day on April 2 nears, my humble request to journalists and mainstream media is to do your duty of imparting factual and medically sound knowledge and information. Learn from your mistakes and ensure your stories and visual representations are accurate because media has the power to help or harm. As



I watch my feisty, opinionated and uber affectionate ASD child thrive in a typical school and social setting thanks to early childhood interventions and therapy. I shudder at the thought of what could have been our reality if I had paid heed to the photos of what Autism looks like in Bangladesh media. I hope those reading this will take heed. Autism is a complex state of being, and no two autistics are alike. Every time I meet and spend time with someone with Autism, I am amazed at how unique, creative, and what a gift they are to the world. I want to change how we treat those we deem to be different, not change who they are. For centuries all we have done is find creative ways to separate the majority from the minority. I hope the two years of the global pandemic will finally make us realize that when one group of people mistreat another, be it

through military, financial or social power, we all suffer, not just the ones we discriminate against. Saima Wazed Hossain is Advisor to the Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO), on Mental Health and Autism. She is Chairperson, National Advisory Committee for Autism and NDDs, Bangladesh and Chairperson, Shuchona Foundation. She is a specialist in Clinical Psychology and an expert on Neurodevelopment disorders and mental health. Her efforts have led to international awareness, policy and program changes, and the adoption of three international resolutions at the United Nations and WHO. Zain Bari Rizvi is a Board Member of Shuchona Foundation, an Operations and Finance professional who is a passionate advocate for people with Autism and a mother of two children.

Farmers in Fiji 'shortchanged' in cane payments; lost \$13.8m

Sugarcane farmers in Fiji lost \$13.87 million after being "shortchanged" in their cane payments from 2019 to 2021. Sugar Minister Charan Jeath Singh said this in Parliament this week.

Yes, there was a shortchange but let me go beyond 2019. Let us start with 2017," Mr Singh said. "In 2017, the previous gov-

ernment gave \$85 per tonne. In 2018, they also gave \$85 per tonne. "What happened in 2019? What the former minister for economy said, and I quote: 'What's new in this budget is that we will be setting up a stabilisation fund, funded in partnership with Fiji Sugar Corporation of \$85 a tonne for all cane payment for the next three

years'. "That was what the former minister for economy said.

Now come 2019, instead of paying \$85, they paid \$82.21, a shortfall of \$2.79."

Mr Singh said in 2020, farmers were paid \$82.41, a shortfall of \$2.59 and in 2021, they were paid \$81.93, a shortfall of \$3.07. "In that case, the farmers lost \$13.87 million and you fooled

the cane farmers. "I am a cane farmer. I lost \$8500 in the short-change.

"There is a saying that goes that you can fool someone sometimes but you cannot fool someone all the time. And that is why they fooled the farmers." His comments were met with jeers from the Opposition side, with FijiFirst MP

Parveen Kumar responding to the claims. "I just want to inform the honourable minister that the short change that he has been talking about, which he has not revealed, was for the industry cost," Mr Kumar said. "That was paid on behalf of the farmers. Please go and do some research."

World News

CIVICUS Report Exposes a Civil Society Under Attack

NAIROBI, Mar 31 (IPS) - As conflict and crises escalate to create human emergencies that have displaced over 100 million people worldwide, civil society's vital role of advocating for victims and monitoring human rights cannot be over-emphasised. The 2022 Nobel Peace Prize award to activists and organisations in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine for working to uphold human rights in the thick of conflict underpins this role. Yet this has not stopped gross violations of civic space as exposed by the State of Civil Society report from CIVICUS, the global civil society alliance, which was officially launched on March 30, 2023. "This year's report is the 12th in its annual published series, and it is a critical look back on 2022. Exploring trends in civil society action, at every level and in every arena, from struggles for democracy, inclusion, and climate justice to demands for global governance reform," said Ines Pousadela from CIVICUS. The report particularly highlights the many ways civil society comes under attack, caught in the crossfire and or deliberately targeted. For instance, the Russian award winner, the human rights organisation Memorial, was ordered to close in the run-up to the war. The laureate from Belarus, Ales Bialiatski, received a 10-year jail sentence. Mandeep Tiwana stressed that the repression of civic voices and actions is far from unique. In Ethiopia, "activists have been detained by the state. In Mali, the ruling military junta has banned activities of CSOs that receive funding from France, hampering humanitarian support to those affected by conflict. In Italy, civil society groups face trial for rescuing migrants at sea." Spanning over six chapters titled responding to conflict and crisis, mobilising for economic justice, defending democracy, advancing women's and LGBTQI+ rights, sounding the alarm on the climate emergency and urging global governance reform, the analysis presented by the report draws from an ongoing analysis initiative, CIVICUS Lens. On responding to conflict and crisis, Oleksandra



Matviichuk from the Center for Civil Liberties in Ukraine spoke about the Russian invasion and the subsequent "unprecedented levels of war crimes against civilians such as torture and rape. And, a lack of accountability despite documented evidence of crimes against civilians." Bhavani Fonseka, from the Centre for Policy Alternatives, Sri Lanka, addressed the issue of mobilising for economic justice and how Sri Lanka captured the world's attention one year ago through protests that start small in neighbourhoods and ultimately led to the President fleeing the country. Launched in January 2022, CIVICUS Lens is directly informed by the voices of civil society affected by and responding to the major issues and challenges of the day. Through this lens, a civil society perspective of the world as it stands in early 2023 has emerged: one plagued by conflict and crises, including democratic values and institutions, but in which civil society continues to strive to make a

crucial difference in people's lives. On defending democracy, Amine Ghali of the Al Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center in Tunisia spoke about the challenge of removing authoritarian regimes, making significant progress in levels of democracy only for the country to regress to authoritarianism. "It starts with the narrative that democracy is not delivering; let me have all the power so that I can deliver for you. But they do not deliver. All they do is consolidate power. A government with democratic legitimacy demolishing democracy is where we are in Tunisia," he said. Erika Venadero from the National Network of Diverse Youth, Mexico, spoke about the country's journey that started in the 1960s towards egalitarian marriages. Today, same-sex marriages are provided for in the law. On global governance reforms, Ben Donaldson from UNA-UK spoke about global governance institutional failure and the need to improve what is working and reform what

is not, with a special focus on the UN Security Council. "It is useful to talk about Ukraine and the shortcomings of the UN Security Council. A member of the UN State Council is unable to hold one of its members accountable. There are, therefore, tensions at the heart of the UN. The President of Ukraine and many others ask, what is the UN for if it cannot stop the Ukraine invasion?" Baraka, a youthful climate activist and sustainability consultant in Uganda, spoke about ongoing efforts to stop a planned major pipeline project which will exacerbate the ongoing climate crisis, affecting lives and livelihoods. His concerns and actions are in line with the report findings that "civil society continues to be the force sounding the alarm on the triple threat of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Urging action using every tactic available, from street protest and direct action to litigation and advocacy in national and global arenas." But in the con-

text of pressures on civic space and huge challenges, the report further finds that "civil society is growing, diversifying and widening its repertoire of tactics." Moving forward, the report highlights 10 ideas, including an urgent need for a broad-based campaign to win recognition of civil society's vital role in conflict and crisis response as well as greater emphasis by civil society and supportive states on protecting freedom of peaceful assembly. Additionally, the need for civil society to work with supportive states to take forward plans for UN Security Council reform and proposals to open up the UN and other international institutions to much greater public participation and scrutiny. In all, strengthening and enhancing the membership and reach of transnational civil society networks to enable the rapid deployment of solidarity and support when rights come under attack was also strongly encouraged.

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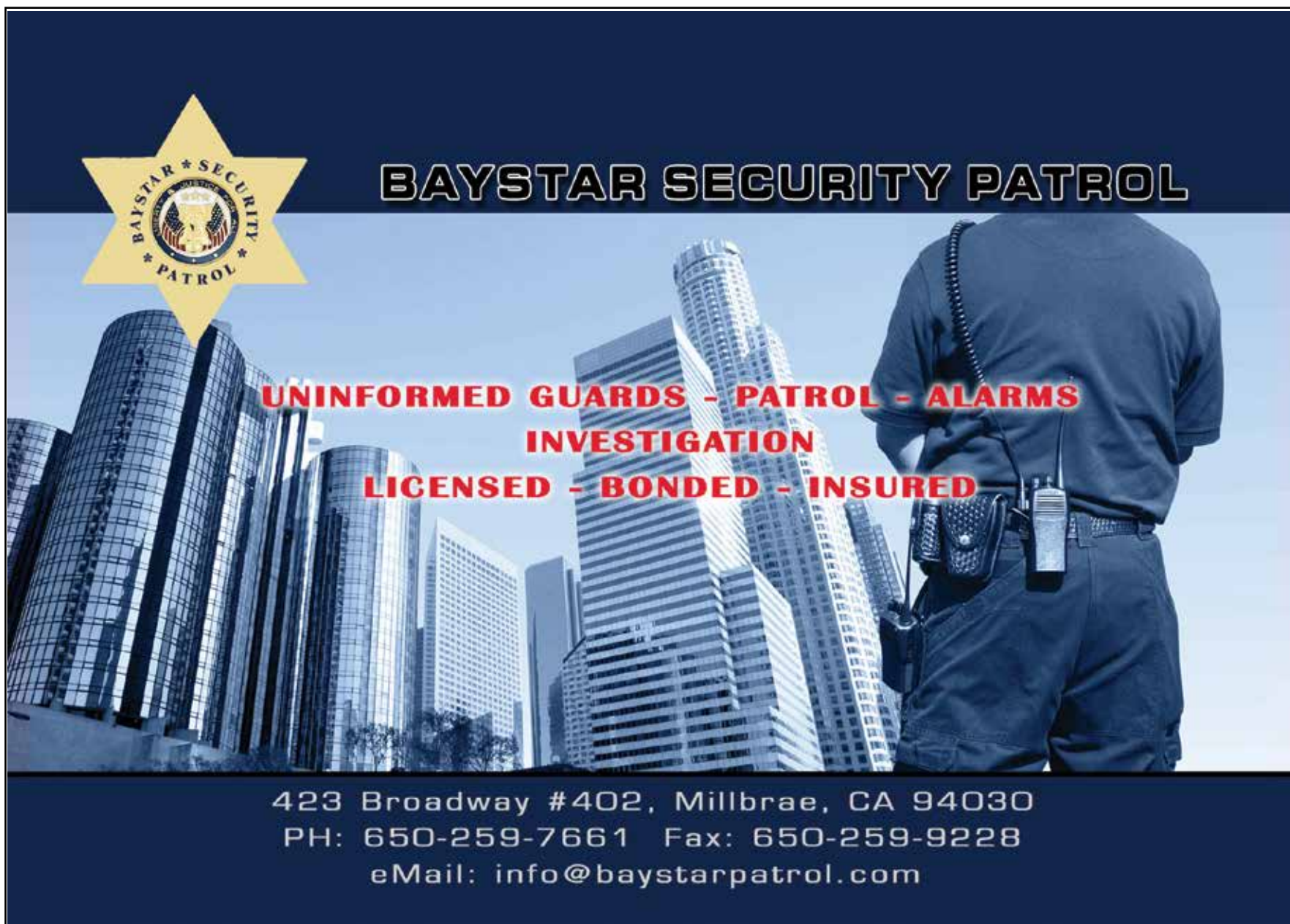


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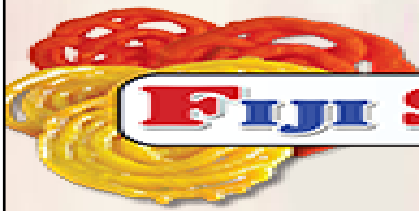


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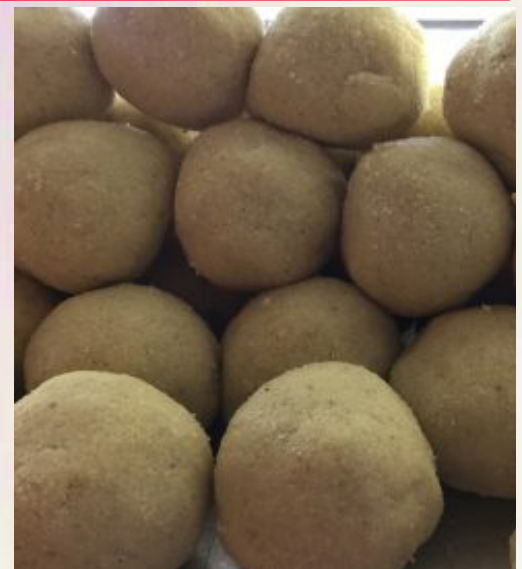
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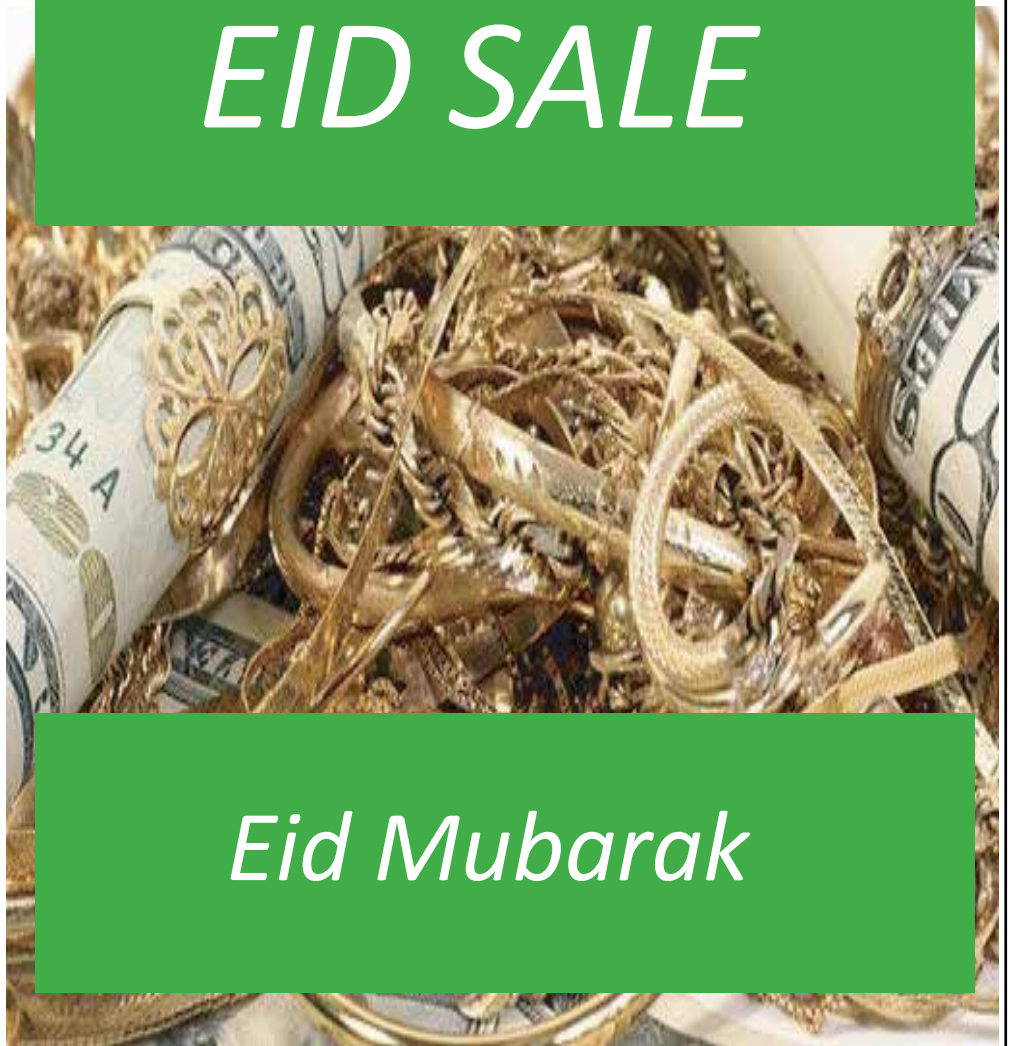
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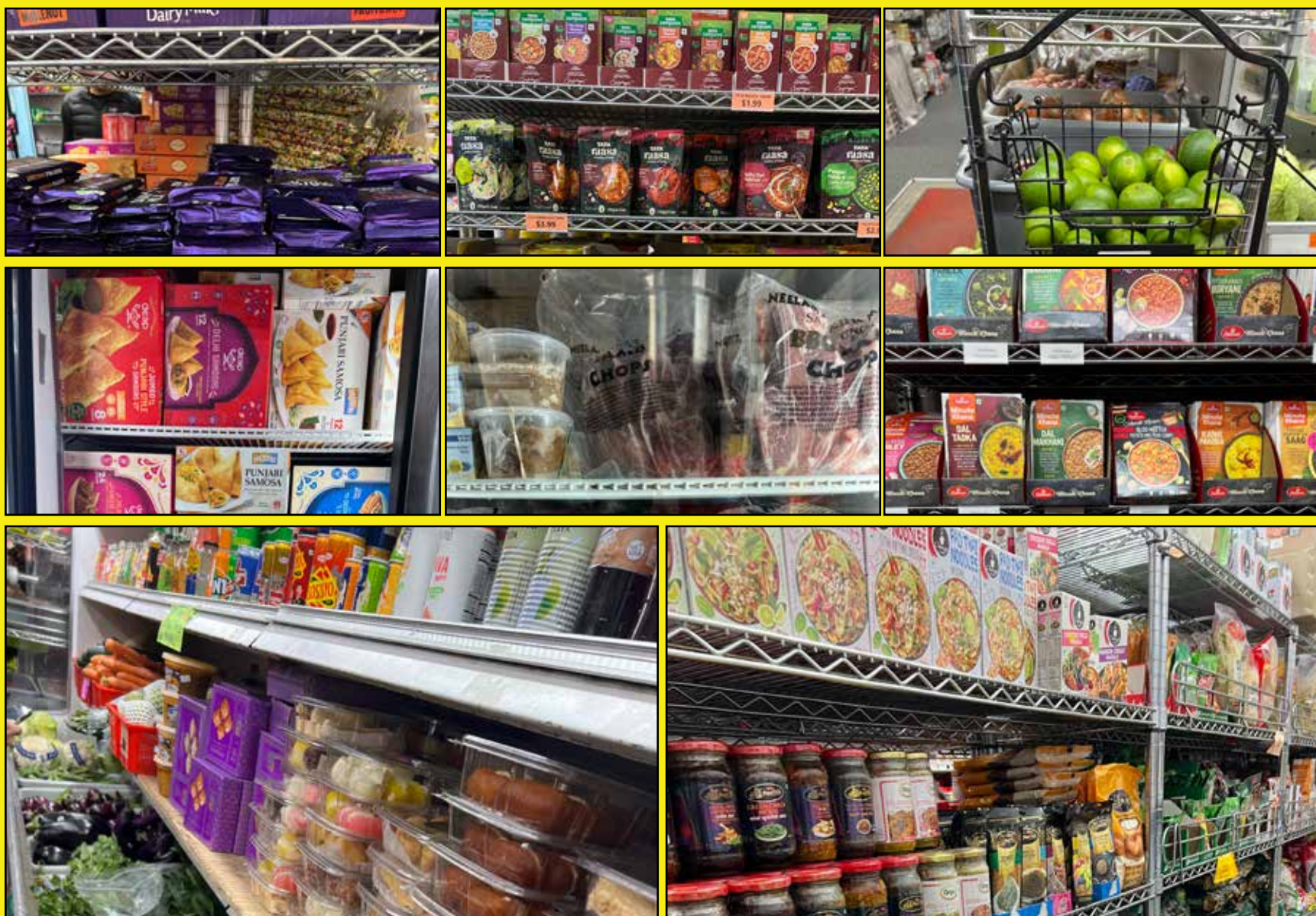
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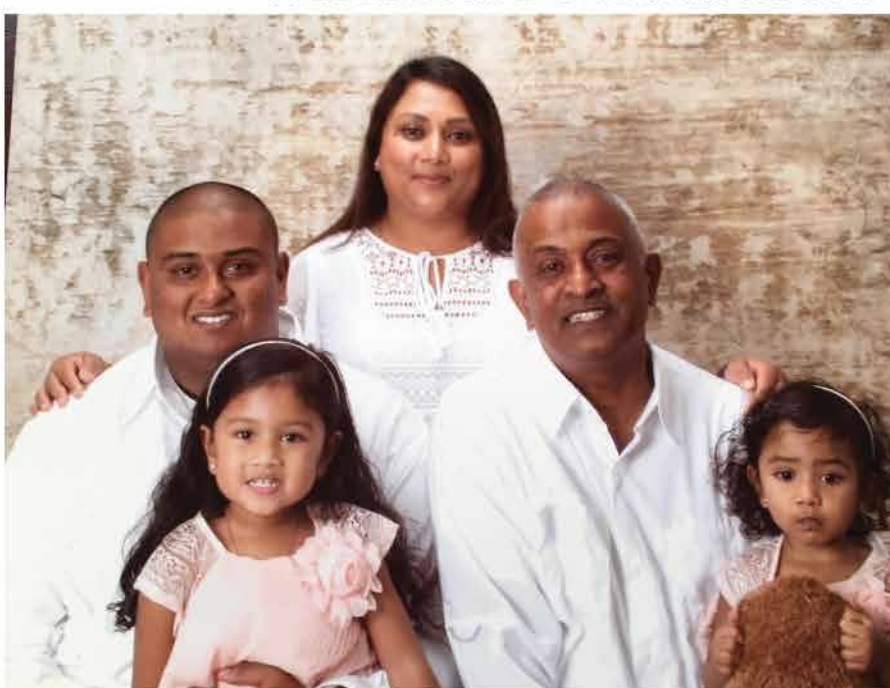
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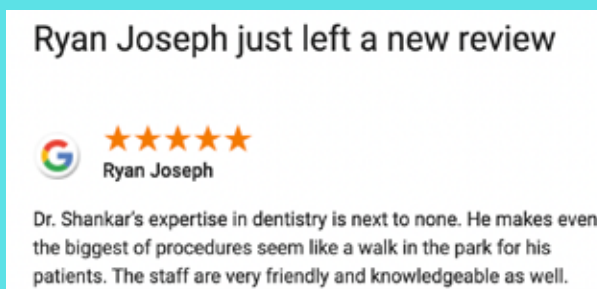
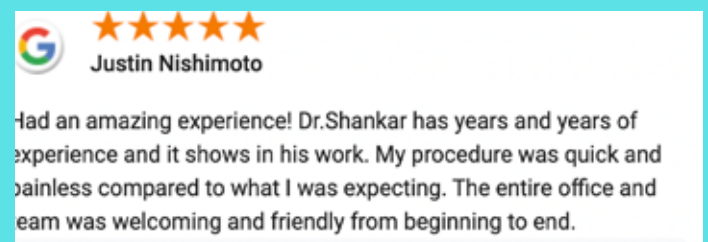
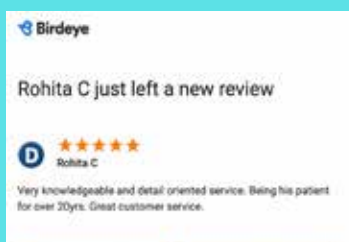
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Fiji News

Late Prof Lal's Family Grateful To Government For Interment

EMOTIONS were running high as people gathered in the hundreds at Tabia Sanatan College in Labasa to pay their last respects to the late Professor Brij Lal. His widow, Doctor Padma Lal with her family from Australia with the late professor's cremated remains for an interment after 12 years of not being able to come back home. Late Prof. Lal won local and international fame as a writer, historian and an academic while specialising in chronicling the settlers from India, the Girmityas; their later history in Fiji and their politics. Dr Lal thanked the Coalition Government, in particular Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, for revoking the prohibition order which allowed her to bring her late husband's ashes to Fiji. "We are indeed honoured to have the Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka and the Deputy Prime Minister Biman Prasad along with all of you to be here with us to mark Brij's homecoming before the final interment," she said. "Our family would like to thank you as this would not

have been possible without the decision made by the PM and his Coalition Government. In the 12-years of being in exile, not for one moment Brij and I had lost hope of returning – we remained optimistic." "We said, one day, we will return to our country of birth to continue our respective research on issues important to Fiji and the Pacific and continue to contribute in whatever little ways we can," Dr Lal added. She added that "over the years, Brij had written several times to the Department of Immigration and to the PM's Office while petitions were also signed calling for the removal of the travel ban but it was not acknowledged". Dr Lal said the personal and professional cost of the travel ban on them was huge. Prime Minister Rabuka said the late Professor was "dedicated to the ideals of democracy, particularly freedom of speech and expression which saw him being forced to leave, and return to his academic work in Australia". "I am duty-bound to announce a full official apology to Professor Brij Lal's fam-



ily on behalf of the Government and the people – we are sorry and ashamed for the way you and the late Professor Lal were treated and promise that during our term such injustices will not be repeated." "Like Professor Lal, our Coalition Government believes multiracial societies should strive for multiracial governments and that, as a principle, all groups should have the constitutional right to share power," PM Rabuka stressed.

"To the children of Tabia Primary School - ask your teachers to tell you about your famous school member, Professor Lal, and how much he cared about freedom, then follow in his footsteps and become a hero of freedom like him". Minister for Finance, Biman Prasad, said "justice has been done although in trying, difficult and sad circumstances as we welcome Professor Lal home". "This is truly an emotional occasion

yet highly symbolic because it permanently buries oppression being endured for the last 16 years in this country. It elevates the Coalition Government and PM Rabuka's most important principle of full restoration and total respect for fundamental rights and freedom." Prof. Lal died at the age of 69 in Brisbane, Australia, on December 25th, 2021 and his ashes were carried to a location on the bank of the Tabia River.

European Investment Bank Opens Regional Office in Fiji

ILISAPECI TUIVALE "This is a great moment for both European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Government of Fiji as this marks an important milestone in our EU-Fiji partnership." "It is indeed a sign of confidence and trust placed by EIB in the future of our country and shows EIB's willingness to not only deepen its engagement with Fiji but expand its role in the region." Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning and Statistics, Professor Biman Prasad said the opening of the new EIB regional office was an advantage seeing that Fiji was well positioned as the hub of the Pacific and the EIB will now be more accessible to its current and future clients. This will also greatly complement the presence and valuable contributions of other international institutions such as the World Bank, Asian De-

velopment Bank, International Monetary Fund, International Finance Corporation, the United Nations, and others. "The European Union has been an important partner in our development process and more recently with the engagements with EIB, now the presence of the regional office here in Fiji we look forward to more fruitful and deeper engagements," Minister Prasad said. EIB Vice-President, Ambroise Fayolle, who is also in-charge of EIB's Pacific operations, said: "With the opening of an EIB representation office in Suva, the bank of the European Union is demonstrating its growing ambition to be closer to the people, companies and institutions of the Pacific region, and to invest more in projects there. What we aim to do is reinforce Team Europe's presence on the ground".



"This office will be another bridge between the region and the European Union, including as part of the EU Global Gateway initiative. It will help address key issues such as climate change and climate resilience, the energy crisis and food inse-

curity more efficiently," Mr Fayolle said. "Looking ahead, I am confident that we will be able to make a difference in helping to unlock green, sustainable and empowering growth and development for Fiji and the Pacific region." The EIB is the Euro-

pean Union's long-term financing institution that is owned by its member states. To contribute towards the EU's policy goals, the EIB is responsible for making long-term finance available for sound investments.

Fiji News

FNU Helps Fulfil Dream of Tongan National

The Fiji National University (FNU) provides opportunities to individuals, not just in Fiji but in the region, through various courses and easy enrolment benchmarks for students to up-skill themselves. This was acknowledged by an elated young Tongan national, Hepisipa Matekitonga, who graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical) with Honours (Lower Second Class) from FNU's College of Engineering, Science and Technology last week. "I started studying at Auckland University, New Zealand in 2015 through a scholarship. Unfortunately, my scholarship got terminated and the courses at FNU were much cheaper so I enrolled here in 2019 with my two years of study also being cross-credited," Ms Matekitonga highlighted. "I waited two years to resume study due to the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the Pacific and the world, and I was lucky to get an attachment at an organisation last year for

six-months - a core requirement to graduate," she added. "In my childhood I used to take apart radios and electrical equipment to see how it worked and to also find faults and try repairing them. So, when I finished high school, I was naturally driven to take up electrical engineering as a career choice." "After eight-years of hard work and dedication all this has been worth the wait and I thank FNU for giving me this opportunity to fulfil my dream and my parents and God for always guiding me in the right path," she added. Ms Matekitonga adds that "electrical engineering is a male dominated area and as a female, know that nothing can stop you from dreaming big - just have a lot of patience and commitment". Minister for Education, Aseri Radrodro, while officiating the graduation ceremony, applauded the students for their hard work and determination to reach this far. "I commend the 572 graduates for their tenacity, commitment, and sacrifice,"



Minister Radrodro said. He encouraged the students to pursue opportunities with a goal-oriented ambition and to remain steadfast in their commitment to serving others. The College has about 15 active higher degree research students with 11 enrolled in Masters by Research

programme and four students in PhD programmes. FNU Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba said that "it is worth recalling that a diamond can only be formed through the application of immense heat and pressure, and once polished, it becomes a precious gem". "Today, you are that precious gem

that FNU has polished, and you are now ready to shine bright in your chosen field of work," Prof. Nabobo-Baba added. In the 2022-2023 National Budget under the allocation for Higher Education Institutions, the Fiji Government has provided FNU funding of \$45.35 million.

Tubuna Urges Fijians To Respect Each Others Culture And Religion

The coalition Government will continue to uphold the Constitution which provides the freedom and right for everyone to practise their religion and celebrate special occasions such as the Ram Naumi. This was the reassurance made by the Assistant Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Sakiusa Tubuna while officiating at the Ram Naumi celebration at Muanikoso Housing in Nasinu on Monday. "We will respect the rights and freedom of every individual and we encourage everyone to be proud of which religion and culture they belong to," he highlighted.



Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay Observes Earth Hour

A total of 120,000 watt hours were saved by Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay during the Earth Hour celebration event last Saturday. The property actively participated in Earth Hour by joining in solidarity

with millions of people worldwide from 190 countries and territories to give an hour for earth. General manager Silvano Dressino said the event was attended by 150 guests during the one hour event.



Fiji News

Young Tailor Perseveres With Government Assistance

The secret to success is to start from scratch and for Navneet Shivakaran, the proud owner of Navneet's Tailoring business in Labasa, the dictum rings true for him. In 2020, Mr Shivakaran attended a Mobile Skills Training on sewing which was organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The 24-year old lad from Dreketi began his journey operating a tailoring business of his own from his residence in Malawai, Dreketi where much of his craftsmanship includes sewing of wedding attires, school uniforms, kids wear, women's and men's wear among many other styles. Navneet's Tailoring began to take a turning point as it gained traction from the public but he did not rest on his laurels and sought out the Youth

Grant under the Ministry. The Dreketi lad was handed over an industrial heavy duty sewing machine worth approximately \$3000 last October. Like all of the Government's initiatives and programmes, the assistance has a monitoring mechanism. Upon careful monitoring conducted by the Ministry, an increase was noted in the number of customer orders. On a weekly average, Mr Shivakaran generates an income of \$295- \$465 and was able to tailor at least three blouses, three wedding lahenga's, three school uniforms, five shirts and five bula dresses per week. The Minister for Youth and Sports, Jese Saukuru, during his official visit to the Northern Division earlier recently, said that appropriate guidance and training was



vital for young people to make knowledgeable decisions, avoid crime and use their abilities and potential for a sustainable liveli-

hood and success. He said that the Government wanted to unearth and develop the best in the youth, empowering them

to become agents of change, development and sustainable livelihood in communities.

FSC Pays Out Third Cane Payment For 2022 Harvest

The Fiji Sugar Corporation Ltd (FSC) paid a third cane payment to sugarcane farmers for the 2022 harvest season. According to FSC's Chief Executive Officer, Bhan Pratap Singh, this year's third cane payment of \$24.62 per tonne is one of the highest in the last two decades. The Sugar Industry Tribunal has certified that the nett share of the sugarcane growers' cane proceeds received as of February 28th 2022, is \$185,454,314, equivalent to \$78.15 per tonne of cane, in accordance with the Sugar Industry Master Award. FSC has paid out to date a total of \$53.53 per tonne of cane to farmers, which includes a \$40.15 per tonne delivery payment and \$13.38 per tonne second cane payment. The third cane payment of \$24.62 per tonne of cane was paid on Wednesday, March 29th, 2023, bringing the total amount paid to farmers for the 2022 cane payment to \$78.15 per tonne of cane. A sum of approximately \$40m has been paid to the growers as a third cane payment. "This better third cane payment is a result of the hard work and dedication of our sugarcane farmers, the factory



workers and all other stakeholders. The demand for sugar in the world markets has continued to be better in the last season, and FSC was able to secure better prices for the sugar that was sold for the last season's crop," said Mr Singh. "FSC is committed to supporting our farmers and ensuring the sustainability of the sugarcane industry in Fiji. We will continue to work closely with our stakeholders to address our farmers' challenges and pro-

vide them with the support they need to succeed." In addition, FSC would like to advise all sugarcane farmers to use the third cane payment wisely and prepare for the next crushing season. The sugarcane industry is vital to Fiji's economy, and its sustainability depends on its farmers' success. FSC encourages all farmers to use the funds to invest in equipment, infrastructure, and practices that will improve their yields

and increase the quality of their sugarcane. By doing so, farmers can help ensure the long-term viability of their farms and the industry as a whole. FSC is also committed to assisting farmers in access to inputs such as technical support and training to improve the quality and yield of their crops. The Corporation is also working on initiatives to increase the efficiency of the harvesting and transportation processes, which will benefit

farmers by reducing costs and increasing profits. FSC would like to thank all the sugarcane farmers for their hard work and dedication towards the industry. The Corporation looks forward to continuing its partnership with the farmers and stakeholders and wishes all farmers success in the next harvesting season, and looks forward to working with them to build a brighter future for Fiji's sugarcane industry.

Fiji News

Only 40% Of Fijian Women Are Employed

Only 40 per cent of Fijian women are employed and earn an average one third less than men. This was highlighted by the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Lynda Tabuya in her ministerial statement in Parliament on Wednesday. Speaking on the newly-launched Fiji Country Gender Assessment (FCGA), Ms Tabuya highlighted that women in Fiji shouldered three quarters of unpaid care work at home.



Fiji hosts discussions on GBV training

Members of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women (PWNAAVW) from 13 crisis centres are in Lautoka, Fiji to discuss the roll-out of the Gender-Based Violence Counsellor Training Package for the Pacific. The event is organised in partnership with the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) and the UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office (MCO), through the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women (Pacific Partnership). The meeting is funded primarily by the European Union, UN Women and the Australia and New Zealand governments. In a joint statement by FWCC and UN Women MCO, the three-day meeting of Pacific experts will see the continuation of decades long progress led by the crisis centres towards standardising best practice approaches to gender-based violence counselling in the Pacific. FWCC co-ordinator and PWNAAVW chair Shamima Ali said Fiji was pleased to host network members from around the Pacific. "We are pleased to be hosting and to discuss how we will adapt and roll-out the gender-based counsellor training package in each of our countries," Ms Ali said. "It's a good opportunity for us to also discuss the next big step in this process which is the regional counsellor training-of-trainer's workshop coming up in April." She said the aim of the workshop was for all women and girl survivors across the Pacific to access uniform and consistent survivor-centred counselling



from trained counsellors at the centres. The package, adapted from training materials previously developed and used by FWCC across the region over the past three decades, would be used by new and experienced trainers from Pacific Island countries working on vio-

lence against women, girls and women's human rights. Representative for UN Women Delphine Serumaga said they were pleased to continue supporting the PWNAAVW in responding to violence against women and girls. "This will further enhance the accessibility and quality of

services for women and girls across the region for years to come," she said. Following the three-day meeting, representatives of the PWNAAVW and UN Women will join the Pacific Community and the counselling sub-committee of the Regional Working Group

on the implementation of family protection and domestic violence legislation. The two-day regional stakeholder dialogue will discuss, among other key issues, the development of a regional gender-based violence and domestic violence counselling framework.

Fiji News

Tarakinikini commissioned as Fiji's PRUN

Former senior military officer Filipo Tarakinikini was recently commissioned by the President, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere, as Fiji's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (PRUN). Mr Tarakinikini who served the Republic of Fiji Military Forces for 22 years before retiring at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 2002 takes over the duties of PRUN from Dr Satyendra Prasad. He will be based in New York. He became the Chief of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Section at the UNDSS, in the Headquarters in New York in 2018 where he led UN inter-agency assessment missions to countries like Iraq, and Syria; facilitated the establishment of the UN monitoring missions in Yemen, Iraq and Libya and led numerous field assistance missions. And he was part of the strategic assessment team for the UNSMIL mission in Libya in 2022.



Prof Biman attacks FijiFirst for its reckless spending

Development partners like Australia, New Zealand and Japan wrote us large cheques for hundreds of millions of dollars to help us pay bills because they knew we needed help. Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Professor Biman Prasad said this in his ministerial statement in Parliament yesterday where he attacked the FijiFirst government for its reckless spending that resulted in Fijians living in a "debt-driven economic fantasy land". He said Fiji survived the COVID-19 crisis because of the numerous aid packages provided by Australia, New Zealand and Japan but now that the pandemic was over, the country had to find its own footing. "Governments like Australia and New Zealand wrote us large cheques, for hundreds of millions of dollars to help us pay the bills. Japan lent us \$200m at almost zero interest for the next 40 years," he said. "All of these lenders and governments recognised that simple humanity demanded that we be given help. "But now the pandemic is over and we must once again stand on our own two feet. And this, is where our past will come



back to haunt us. "In the new post-COVID world, we cannot expect to simply borrow money at will. Our current debt position will come under scrutiny." Prof Prasad said while optimism was always good, Government also recognised the hard facts. "The optimistic scenario assumes

"business as usual". And the Government cannot continue with 'business as usual'. And let me talk about why. "For the last 10 years we have been living in a debt-driven economic fantasy land. We have been pretending that we can just carry on as usual and everything will be all right.

That is not true. "For the last 10 years we have neglected basic infrastructure, the basic physical fabric that underpins the way many of us live and work. "We all assume, every day, that there will be water in our taps, that our roads and bridges will work, that our natural environ-

ment will remain unspoiled, that our hospitals will look after us when we get sick and that our children will get a decent education. "But every one of those assumptions is now at risk. And that is why I emphasise, we cannot just continue with business as usual."

Fiji News

Tourism leakages in Fiji

Tourism industry leakage is a big factor in national development and there is a need to understand what leakages are taking place from which sectors or the industry. This was highlighted by Professor Paresh Narayan of Monash University and the president of the Asia-Pacific Applied Economics Association (APAEA) at a public lecture held at the Reserve Bank of Fiji on Wednesday. Speaking on the issue 'Global tourism industry's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and policy implications for Fiji's tourism industry', Prof Narayan said understanding the revenue leakages would enable the government to make informed taxation and investment policies. According to Prof Narayan, Fiji's tourism industry has done well but that is no reason to be complacent. "We need to continue to search for innovation and uniqueness of our tourism product. We need to embrace and market an identity for Fiji tourism that ensures that we become shock (like the pandemic or other extreme events) resistant," he said. "Fiji has not been able to achieve a global tourism identity that is shock resistant." Prof Narayan said Fiji



needed to develop its tourism identity that could stand the tide of global shocks. "I am suggesting Fiji enhance its ecotourism component. Green tourism that blends climate change will be an idea Fiji tourism product." He

said while ecotourism had been in Fiji for ages, it had not grown to the extent that it could benefit the locals, including indigenous people and villages. "It has not been sufficiently developed to enhance the livelihood of the

indigenous populations that are at the forefront of village based ecotourism. "We need to see this grow to become a truly global model of success. "Ecotourism — village based tourism — should be enhanced while

retaining the green tourism aspects. This when done will make Fiji tourism sustainable, socially beneficial and environmentally friendly."

Fiji broadcaster ordered to pay doctor \$50k

Fijian Broadcasting Corporation Ltd has been ordered to pay \$50,000 to a doctor who was labelled as "fake" in a news story published in September 2016. Shanjivan Padarath claimed damages for cyber libel loss and damage to his fame, profession, dignity, prospect of promotion, employment abroad, mental distress, anxiety, pain and suffering. Mr Padarath claimed the representations were false, untrue, inaccurate and misleading and that the use of his photograph was malicious, deliberate and recklessness. FBC removed the photograph without any public apology and compensation after seven days. FBC Ltd said the publication was done in good faith without malice. "I note that the impugned publication does not name the plaintiff, neither in the caption nor in the body.

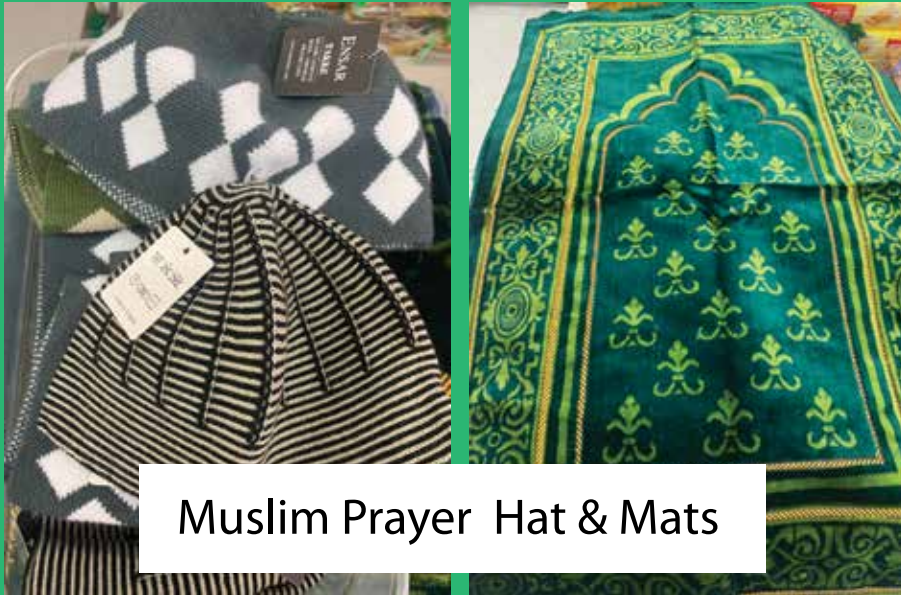
"The photograph published is a side view picture of the seated plaintiff with two people seated in front of him," stated Justice A.L.B. Brito-Mutunayagam in his March 16 ruling. "The reader is told that a man pretending to be a doctor with no medical qualifications has been exposed as a fraud and the so-called fake doctor had been operating for the last three months. "In my judgment, the natural and ordinary meaning which would have been conveyed to the ordinary reasonable reader by the article and the photograph is that the plaintiff was the fake doctor with no medical qualifications. Any reasonable man would come to this conclusion. "Why else was the plaintiff's picture used and not an animated picture?" FBC Ltd also has to pay Dr Padarath \$4000 in costs.



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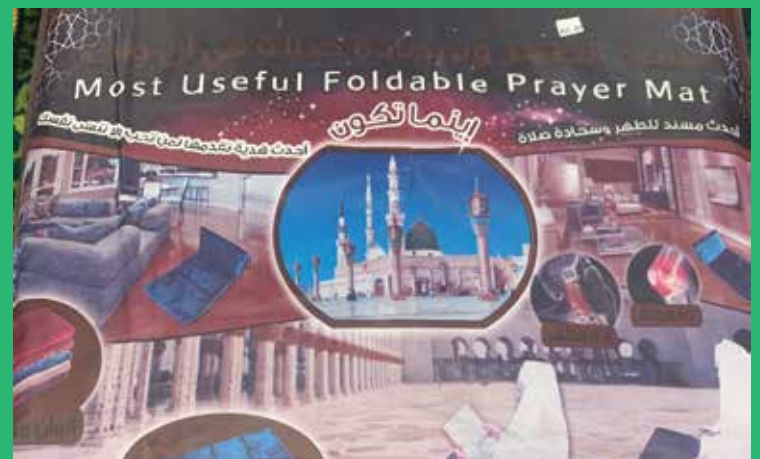
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Health News

Experimental Obesity Treatment Could Produce Weight Loss Without Surgery or Nausea

A new drug might potentially treat obesity without surgery and without the side effects of current medications, according to new research presented at the spring meeting of the American Chemical Society. In rats, the peptides tested dramatically reduced weight and lowered blood sugar. Researchers used rats to test a new peptide for weight loss. What the researchers found

In the study, rats on the experimental drug liraglutide ate up to 80% less than they would typically eat and, by day 16, had lost an average of 12% of their weight. There was no indication of nausea or vomiting. Injectable compounds typically reduce the side effects of nausea and vomiting, common in other weight loss medications. The weight loss was an effect of decreased eating and higher energy expenditure. The researchers noted that the rats showed increased movement, heart rate, or body temperature. A research team led by Robert Doyle, PhD, a professor of chemistry at Syracuse University and Dr. Christian Roth, a physician specializing in Endocrinology and Diabetes at Seattle Children's Hospital, created the peptide. The rats received the medication by injection a few times a week. The scientists noted that this schedule kept the weight off and lowered blood sugar levels



by pulling glucose into muscle tissue, where it could potentially turn into fuel. It also converts some cells in the pancreas into insulin-producing cells, helping to replace those damaged by diabetes. While the research is still in the early stages, the researchers think that the experimental drug has potential. The researchers note that between 80% and 90% of people taking weight-loss medications that are currently available discontinue use within a year. "The study shows an interesting potential for a drug that may be better tolerated

than currently available drugs," says Dr. Mir Ali, bariatric surgeon and medical director of MemorialCare Surgical Weight Loss Center at Orange Coast Medical Center in Fountain Valley, CA. Ali pointed out there are few concerns about this early research: First, these are only early results in a rodent model; it will take some years before it gets to the point of human trials. Second, side effects are not necessarily the only reason patients stop medication: cost is a significant factor in many of these medications. And finally,

most studies have shown that when a patient stops a weight loss medication, they regain significant weight. Surgery, by far, has significantly more effective long-term outcomes." Another unexpected result that surfaced in the study is a reduced craving for opioids such as fentanyl. If it works the same way in humans, it can help people addicted to opioids quit or fend off relapses. The scientists have filed for a patent and plan to test the peptide in primates. "Overall, this is a promising new development in the treatment of obesity," says Dr. Minisha Sood, an endocrinologist at Lenox Hill Hospital. "Activating brain regions that might have a profound appetite suppressant effect which would be yet another option in persons with obesity and upregulated appetite centers in the brain, especially those who do not respond to Diabetes medications, such as Trulicity or Ozempic, alone." "Given it appears to have dual agnosticism properties, I would expect it to be even more effective than Ozempic, a single agonist, in appetite suppression," Dr. Sood said. What You Need to Know About Obesity Overweight and obesity are chronic, common conditions in the United States, according to the National Institutes of Health. Trusted Source.

These conditions are linked

to heart disease, diabetes, and cancer and can aggravate many other health conditions. The causes of obesity include: Eating patterns, such as eating high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and beverages Lack of sleep Lack of physical activity Some medications, such as those for diabetes, depression, or high blood pressure Genetics and family history

Around three-fourths of adults in the US older than age 20 have either overweight or obesity. About 20% of children between ages 2 and 19 years have obesity. Medical professionals use body mass index (BMI) to screen for overweight and obesity. The calculation is the weight (in kilograms) divided by the square of height (in meters.) There are several BMI calculators online, including one from the CDC. Trusted Source. "For any further studies on weight reduction I'd like further study to evaluate not only weight loss but body composition," Sood told Healthline. "We simply do not have enough insight into whether patients on gut hormone agonists for weight loss are primarily losing fat or a combination of muscle and fat (the latter is more likely). Losing muscle would be antithetical to the goal of aging well and maintaining a robust metabolism in the aging process."



Sports News

Tamani scores in extra time as Fiji reaches final

Replacement halfback Terio Tamani scored an extra time winner as Fiji defeated Great Britain 19-14 to book its place in the grand final of the 2023 Hong Kong 7s against arch rivals New Zealand. The winner had to be decided by golden point after the teams were locked 14-14 at fulltime. A long pass from Ponipate Loganimasi found Iowane Teba who drew two defenders before offloading the ball to Tamani who raced his way to the try-line and dived to touch-down just a few centimeters from the dead-ball line. The match referee had to use the Technical Match Official

(TMO) to award the try. Robbie Ferguson scored first in the match but a Waisea Nacuqu try leveled things at 7-7 just before halftime. Winger Vuiviawa Naduvalo scored Fiji's second try which was converted by Nacuqu but a Tom Williams try in the 11th minute tied up the scores and despite all efforts, neither of the sides could score as the match entered extra time with Tamani proving to be the hero for Fiji. Meanwhile New Zealand defeated France 12-7 in the first Cup semifinal. The final will kick off at 12.15am tomorrow.



Byrne impressed with Drua's performance

Fijian Drua coach Mick Byrne says the side put on a much improved performance against the Melbourne Rebels in Round 6 of Super Rugby Pacific in Suva on Saturday and he is impressed with the outing. Byrne said the Fijians showed a lot of promise and played like a well-oiled machine in their 38-28 win compared to the disappointing 57-24 loss to the Highlanders last weekend. "Really pleased the way we started and as we talked about it as a team that over the last couple of weeks, we were slow out at the blocks. We know we can go over the 80, we can play but we just needed to start well." "I'm really proud of the way every single player went out of the way and we got the points on the board which

helps in the performance we did." "We had a week at home and got our prep time in the heat. It was more about our desire to carry hard at the game at the start of the game." "Cross the ball, everyone did well and Masi a couple of times made crucial line breaks. The whole team got him behind and it wasn't a one thing moment. There was constant 15 man rugby that we kept pushing across the line." He also acknowledged the hard work and effort displayed by debutants Micheal Naitokani and Philip Baselala, who gave their all in the match. "Full credits to the tight five, there was a massive put on them during the week and they really stepped up today." "First great touch for Micheal. He showed us why we



brought him in and he's a good young player. He moves well, he's just finding his way in the training, he's learning how to

become a professional rugby player and he has improved every week." "Philip had great touches, feeding the ball and

getting on as well. I'm really happy for those two young guys and I'm sure they have a long career up front."

Drua teams dedicate wins to children of Fiji

Rooster Chicken Fijiana Drua and the Swire Shipping Fijian Drua dedicated their Super W and Super Rugby Pacific wins against the Rebels on Saturday to the children of Fiji. Fijiana Drua skipper Bitila Tawake said their 39-12 win over the Melbourne Rebels women was for the aspiring girls and women in Fiji. "Tomorrow (Today) is Palm Sunday so this was a

must-win for the children of Fiji. This one's for them." Fijian Drua defeated Melbourne Rebels 38-28 and skipper Meli Derenalagi said they wanted to gift this win to the young rugby lovers in Fiji. "A lot of children come to watch our match whenever we play at home and their support inspires us. We really wanted to win this for them to make their palm Sunday special.





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Sports

*(Eid Mubarak) Unity Meeting***February 4 th. 2023 will go in the history of Fiji Muslim Sports Association as a day of celebration.**

For 3 long years our Association was split up into 2 factions, each claiming to be the legitimate body representing Muslims in California. Nobody was making any effort to unite these bodies. Master Asaf Ali took this initiative about 6 months ago and convinced both sides that it was in the interest of our younger generation and keeping in mind the importance in Islam about unity that both sides met in an historic meeting in Tracy, California and good sportsmanship was shown by both sides and we agreed on being united. I would like to thank Mukhtar Buksh , Shameer Buksh and Java Saheb for their efforts in bringing these 2 sides together.

This unity has resulted in the Association having 8 teams and strengthens our All Star team to a very competitive level. Let us all pray that we stay united.
Asaf Ali



Muslims unite. From Mukhtar Buksh, Shameer Buksh, Javed Sahib, Mohammed Ali, Rocky Buksh





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Sports

Hong Kong Sevens 2023 live: New Zealand win women's and men's Cup final double – as it happened



What a finale on day three of the Hong Kong Sevens. In the women's competition, New Zealand faced old rivals Australia at 7.40pm, in a showdown most people predicted. And the Kiwis triumphed with a hard-fought 26-17 win. Then, in the men's Cup final, New Zealand made it a double delight, stunning Fiji with a first-half onslaught that proved too much for the perennial favourites to overcome. Hong Kong's men, meanwhile, triumphed in the Shield final against Canada, ending the weekend with two big wins that sent So Kon Po into a frenzy.

Leroy Carter beat the dead-ball line and two defenders in a high-speed chase as New Zealand raced to a big early lead in the first half before Fiji - looking for consecutive win number 42 in Hong Kong - hit back from 90 metres out. Cody Vai had opened the scoring with just 30 seconds on the clock as the All Blacks opened with a statement of intent in their first Hong Kong final since 2016, with Sione Molia doubling their try tally six minutes later, before Carter struck to take the score to 19-0.

Vuiviwa Naduvalu finished off a length-of-the-pitch riposte 60 seconds later to get Fiji on the board - but Nigardhi McGarvey-Black extended the All Blacks' lead again to 24-7 before a breathless opening period ended.

Joseva Talacolo got Fiji's second early in the second half - and a consolation third on the

final whistle as New Zealand claimed their first Hong Kong title since 2014.

Bronze final: France third after thriller

The competition had already exploded into life, to the delight of a large crowd at Hong Kong Stadium. Great Britain's men were unable to repeat the medal-winning heroics of the women's team, as they lost an enthralling encounter against France 19-17, Stephen Perez with the decisive score at the conclusion of an end-to-end encounter. "It feels really good," Jonathan Laugel said afterwards. "We've had some difficult games - all of them were really tough - but we showed consistency. I'm really proud of the guys, even though I would have preferred to play the next [match] against Fiji."

Semi-finals: Fiji survive extra time drama

Earlier, New Zealand made it eight straight wins against France - but had to work hard for the 12-7 victory that saw them through to their first Hong Kong final since 2016. Fiji and Great Britain could not be separated in regulation time despite a frenetic end-to-end conclusion. And the chaos didn't end there - Terio Tamani's match-winning extra time touchdown had to go to the TMO after his celebration touchdown dive nearly took him out of the in-goal area.

It was the second tight match in a row for the Pacific islanders after they came from behind to beat South Africa 10-7 in a tense third quarter-final. Great Britain, meanwhile, bagged the last available semi-final slot with a 21-10 win over USA. Earlier, the four-try All Blacks beat

Argentina 24-10 to book their place in the last four against France - who had twice come from behind against Spain to win 19-14 in extra time. Fiji and Great Britain could not be separated in regulation time despite a frenetic end-to-end conclusion. And the chaos didn't end there - Terio Tamani's match-winning extra time touchdown had to go to the TMO after his celebration touchdown dive nearly took him out of the in-goal area.

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Great Britain, meanwhile, bagged the last available semi-final slot with a 21-10 win over USA.

Fifth-place: Argentina's

Osadczuk uses his head to claim win

A moment of football-style genius/madness ended a slow-burn thriller between Argentina and South Africa. Scoreless for 12 minutes, the game exploded into life when Joaquin Pellandini touched down to give Argentina a 7-0 lead. Ricardo Duarte crossed just before the final whistle for the Blitzbokke to take the score to 7-5.

South Africa needed to claim the restart as the clock ticked into the red. But they didn't get the chance, as Matias Osadczuk headed the kick-off into touch to end the match.

Argentina had earlier ended Spain's Hong Kong adventure with a workmanlike 19-0 win, while South Africa ran in six tries to beat USA 38-7.

Olivas Links Golf Club

ISLAND CUP

Match Play
April 29th & 30th 2023



*Narendra Narayan
President
America Fiji Golf Club*



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