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December 2021 Monthly Publication - Subscription Available Pages 56 Volume: 208

Governments of Fiji and the USA hold extensive discussions in Glasgow



See Page 8

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Govt of Ontario, Canada Provides \$600,000 of Medical Support to Fiji



Fiji's Honorary Consul to Canada, Bobby Naicker today received \$600,000 worth of assistance to support Fiji's COVID-19 response.

The Government of Ontario, home to thousands of Fijians provided this support for Fiji's COVID-19 programs. This support includes equipment and essential supplies. "At a time when Fiji's economic recovery is yet to start and the health services are stretched to their limit; this support is very timely and greatly appreciated." Receiving the support, Hon Consul Naicker thanked both the Government of Ontario, Canada as well as the Fijian diaspora in Ontario for making this happen.

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Fiji's Commissioner Unaisi Vuniwaqa appointed as Asst Sec Gen at United Nations



US Fiji Times extends its warmest congratulations to former United Nations Police Commissioner (in South Sudan), Ms Unaisi Vuniwaqa for once again "blazing a path for peacekeepers and women alike, and wishes her well in her new role as Assistant Secretary-General at the United Nations in New York". Police Commissioner has almost 35 years of experience in law enforcement in Fiji and international level.

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Fijians In United States Recognised With 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medals



Left, Jay Singh & Ambassador Satyendra Prasad-

New York- Permanent Secretary Office of the Prime Minister, Sugar Industry and Permanent Secretary Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yogesh Karan congratulated Fiji's Honorary Consul Mr. Jay Singh and Professor Roy Krishna for their exemplary service and dedication to Fiji's development.

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Satyendra Prasad
Ambassador | Represent-
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Mr. Jay Singh
Honorary Consul
San Francisco U.S.A



Mr. Vinod K Bhindi
Honorary Consul
Los Angeles U.S.A



Mr. Bobby Naicker
Honorary Consul
Vancouver CANADA

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 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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USFT WEBSITE VISITED OVER 1.4 MILLION

Fiji's largest paper, US Fiji Times, has reached a milestone - with 1,000,000 visits to its website, usfijitimes.org. The CEO of USFT, Rocky Buksh, said that this is a major achievement given the fact that the paper was intended just for the Fiji community and indicates that people all over the globe are showing interest in Fiji through the website.

What has led to the recognition of the website has been the paper's presence at many of the World Sevens series, particularly the USA Sevens.

Mr. Buksh thanks all the readers and the advertisers who have promoted the paper to reach this significant milestone and he promises to continue serving Fijians abroad.

Christmas Greetings

Ambassador Satyendra Prasad Extends Christmas Greetings



To the Fijian diaspora in the United States, Canada and elsewhere, compliments of the season to you all. As we enter the festive season, we pause and reflect at the year that was, the achievements that as individual and families we have made. This is a time to pause and reflect on the challenges we have overcome. It is a time to offer our thanks to family, loved ones and to God almighty.

As a country and a people, Fiji has shown our great spirit and unity in truly astonishing ways. Fiji has faced down challenges, weathered climate catastrophes, contained the COVID-19 pandemic. From this month, we start our economic recovery by re-opening our borders. But this is also a time to reflect and offer our prayers for those whom we lost on the way. Everyone one of them and their families are in our thoughts.

The way in which Fijians around the world embraced our common humanity during this trying year has lifted us as country and as a people. The so many times we dug deep into our faith and community searching for pathways out of pandemic and its social and economic hardships has hardened our resilience. We remember these. We remember how friends, neighbors and strangers alike reminded us why we're on this Earth in the first place, to care for one another, to give what we can, and continue to be source of compassion and hope for each one of us.

To our vast diaspora here in North America and globally; I offer my sincerest thanks.

Fiji will continue to look with hope and with pride at its diaspora in North America and elsewhere as it commences its recovery and as it heals the wounds of the pandemic.

While the adverse impact of climate change remains the single most important threat to the development and security of our people, it is heartening to see Fiji re-opening its borders. This presents to many of us an opportunity to visit and reconnect with our families and friends back home during this festive season. For those who wish to invest in Fiji, the easing of travel restrictions could mean an opportunity for your new skills and expertise; your new knowledge that can help our nation's recovery and help its return to a prosperous path.

In this festive season, I hope we will find time to remind ourselves of the meaning of Christmas. Faith and family shape societies. Compassion and care make them great. With renewed enthusiasm and anticipation for a much brighter year ahead, my wife Kushma, and daughter Nehali and I extend to you and your families our best wishes for a merry Christmas and a happy and safe holidays.



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Governments of Fiji and the USA hold extensive discussions in Glasgow



Fiji Government participated in the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) on Climate Change that was held in Glasgow, UK from 31 October to 12th November. Fiji's delegation included Fiji's Prime Minister, Hon. Josaia Bainimarama, Hon. AG and Minister for Economy, Aiyaz-Sayed Khaiyum, Fiji's Ambassador to United Nations, Dr Satyendra Prasad, Fiji's High Commissioner to the UK, Ambassador Jitoko Tikolevu, Permanent Secretary Yogesh Karan among others.

Fiji worked closely with fellow small island states from Pacific to seek international support for more ambitious green house gas emissions

reductions by large countries. Fiji's Prime Minister called for increased financing to support countries to recover from more frequent and more intense cyclones, severe flooding and prolonged droughts. Prime Minister Bainimarama also sought greater international support for small countries on the frontlines of climate change to adapt their economies to a new era in which climate disasters will occur more frequently.

The US Government participation at COP26 included President Joe Biden, Secretary for State Anthony Blinken, Secretary for Transportation Pete Buttigieg, Secretary for Treasury, Janet Yellen, Presidential

Climate Envoy on Climate Change, Secretary John Kerry and former President Barack Obama among others.

Fiji Government and the US Government held several discussions over the two week period. President Biden and the Secretary of State assured Fiji and Pacific leaders that the US looks forward to working more closely with Fiji and Pacific Governments to support their efforts to build more resilient economies that can better withstand the new climate shocks and climate change induced disasters. Secretary for State Anthony Blinken announced several new initiatives by the US Government through which

small states of the Pacific will be able to tap into US government and its private sector for technical assistance, technology and finances.

Fiji's Prime Minister thanked US President and Secretary for State for their commitment and leadership on climate change. Prime Minister Bainimarama said that he "looked forward to continuing the discussions with the US Government on taking forward its commitments through new programs and partnerships with Fiji and the Pacific Islands early in the new year". In summing up the interactions between the US Government and the Fijian Government in Glasgow, Fiji's

Ambassador to the United Nations, Dr Satyendra Prasad said that "one of the "broadest and most substantive engagements between these two governments in our history took place over these two crucial weeks". Ambassador Prasad said that "climate change is a pressing and growing challenge for the USA ; it is a existential challenge for the Pacific. US is a distant superpower – but equally it is a country that is one of Fiji's closest neighbors. American Samoa, Guam and other US territories face exactly the same climate challenges that Fiji and other Pacific states face. We simply need to get on and begin working ever more closely together".

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News

Govt of Ontario, Canada Provides \$600,000 of Medical Support to Fiji

Continued from P-1

Fiji's Ambassador to the UN and High Commissioner to Canada, Dr Satyendra Prasad also extended his thanks to the Governments of Ontario and Canada for their generous support. Ambassador Prasad said that "positioning health supplies in advance of the cyclone season in Fiji is crucial and thus the support is extremely timely".



Fiji's Commissioner Unaisi Vuniwaqa appointed as Asst Sec Gen at United Nations



Continued from P-1

US Fiji Times extends its warmest congratulations to former United Nations Police Commissioner (in South Sudan), Ms Unaisi Vuniwaqa for once again "blazing a path for peacekeepers and women alike, and wishes her well in her new role as Assistant Secretary-General at the United Nations in New York". Police Commissioner has almost 35 years of experience in law enforcement in Fiji and international level.

As the new Assistant Secretary – General for Safety and Security, she will be responsible for the day-to-day management, and support in the overall leadership and management of the

Department. This Department has the overall responsibility for safety and security of UN missions deployed across the world.

Having started her policing career in 1986, she progressed through the ranks, quickly holding various operational and leadership positions till she held the position of Assistant Commissioner of Police Administration in the Fiji Police Force. She most recently held the position of Police Commissioner and Head of the United Nations Police component with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), one of the largest and complex peace-

keeping operations.

The Permanent Secretary to the Office of Prime Minister, Mr Yogesh Karan extended the congratulations of the Fijian Government said that "Ms Vuniwaqa shows that with perseverance, dedication and hard work, Fijians can rise to the top positions internationally". PS Karan said that Madam Vuniwaqa was an "excellent and inspirational role model for Fijian and Pacific Islander women and girls and that the Fijian Government was exceptionally proud of her achievements".



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Fiji News

Fijians In United States Recognised With 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medals



New York- Permanent Secretary Office of the Prime Minister, Sugar Industry and Permanent Secretary Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yogesh Karan congratulated Fiji's Honorary Consul Mr. Jay Singh and Professor Roy Krishna for their exemplary service and dedication to Fiji's development.

Mr. Karan whilst speaking at a Ceremony in which Fiji's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Satyendra Prasad on behalf of His Excellency the President conferred Fiji's 50th Anniversary medals, acknowledged the two gentlemen's outstanding achievements. Professor

Roy Krishna was recognised for his distinguished career and contributions to medical education, research, and development internationally and for sharing those experiences back in Fiji, notably with restructuring of Fiji School of Medicine within the new National University of Fiji and also for the development of Medical Health Sciences Program launched this year at the University of Fiji Umanand Prasad School of Medicine (UPSM).

Fiji's Honorary Consul in San Francisco Mr. Jay Singh was acknowledged for his tireless efforts in mobilising timely assistance with the support of

US community towards Fiji's recovery efforts following two devastating cyclones in Fiji. He was also recognised for his achievements and contribution to Fiji's tourism and business sector investment.

While congratulating both Fijians, Mr. Karan said they have demonstrated passion and perseverance to serve the less fortunate and whilst they have attained success in their fields internationally, they have not forgotten Fiji and they continue to reach out and serve. He said both the gentlemen are great examples of Fiji's Foreign policy at work and the Fijian Government is committed to working

with its vast diaspora to further advance Fiji's social and economic development.

Additionally, Mr. Karan said Fiji is incredibly proud of the appointment by UN Secretary General of Ms. Unaisi Lutu Vuniwaqa as the Assistant Secretary General for Safety and Security in the UN's Department of Safety and Security. While extending Fijian Government's congratulations and best wishes to Madam Unaisi Vuniwaqa for her new role, Mr. Karan said that Madam Vuniwaqa is a fantastic role model for Fijians and Pacific Islanders and her exemplary leadership is a great motivation for

Fijians and for youths that with dedication, hard work and perseverance we can achieve the best for our nation. Both Mr. Singh and Professor Krishna expressed their appreciation for the support provided by the Fijian Government, families and friends in Fiji and around the world.

They affirmed their commitment to Fiji's development and wellbeing through initiatives that support the mandates of the Fijian Government, to ensure that no one is left behind.

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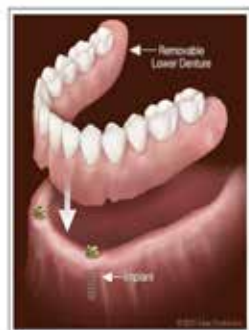
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FIRST FIJIAN CHIEF POLICE OFFICER HIRES FIRST FIJIAN FEMALE POLICE OFFICER IN CITY OF SAN PABLO IN CALIFORNIA



San Pablo Chief of Police, the first Fiji born Police Chief in America, Ron Raman hires first Fiji born Female Police officer Waseemah Ali to San Pablo district. Indeed a great day for Fijian law enforcement officials in America. Waseemah Ali served Stockton Police Dept for two years before moving into San Pablo California.

San Pablo Police Ron Raman has led the way to make the US Fijian proud being the first person of Fiji Origin to become a Police Chief of a local City in California or perhaps the first in the nation. Adding the honor of rendering service to the esteem enforcement positions that upholds the law and ensure our safety is another of local Fijian is Ms. Waseemah Ali. Being added to San Pablo police is indication of the trust the performance of our Fijians to make the community proud and show way to our children to look up and follow the lead to success.

Ms. Ali only 3 years old when she came to USA and thru her good guidance and rearing has come to his position that will see her fulfil her dreams is very competitive profession. Ms. Ali as formally working for Stockton Police and order to render service in better she has joined the San Police under Chief Raman. It is noted that Ron Raman comes from the line of the elite enforcement officer we know to be first local Police Commissioner of Police in Fiji. Mr. P.U Raman.



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Fiji News

MINISTRY ANNOUNCES REVISED SCHOOL PLAN

Students, teachers, parents, guardians, and school management have been acknowledged by the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MEHA) for the resilience they have displayed so far, as well as the support they have shown towards the reopening of schools for Years 12 and 13 from November 1, 2021. As a result of COVID-19, it is imperative that the Ministry continuously revisits the School Plan to ensure a safe school environment for teachers, students and ancillary staff. The School Plan is being revised based on new scientific evidence, the current rollout of face to face teaching and learning for Years 12 and 13, the student vaccination programme, and the sound advice and guidance provided by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS). The Ministry is announcing the revised plan for school holidays, reopening of schools for Early Childhood Education (ECE) to Year 11, and new examination dates for Years 12 and 13. These are as follows:

A. School holidays for teachers and students

- All teachers and students will go on break for 2 weeks starting from 20 December, 2021 until 3 January, 2022.

- The last day of reporting to school for all teachers will be Friday, 17 December, 2021 while the first day of reporting to school after the break for all teachers is Tuesday, 4 January, 2022.

- The last day of remote teaching and learning for ECE to Year 11 students will be Friday, 10 December, 2021, however, teachers will continue reporting to school until Friday, 17 December, 2021 to mark worksheets, assist in the school vaccination programme and prepare for 2022.

- During this break, Years 12 and 13, will be given revision activities to prepare for their external examinations.

B. Revised Examination Date for Years 12 & 13

The Ministry has taken into consideration the requests from the students for more time to prepare for their external examination. In view of this, an additional two weeks will be given to Year 13 and an additional 3 weeks to Year 12 students. The following should be noted:

- The Year 13 examination will be held from 1 to 11 February, 2022 and results are expected to be released on 17 March, 2022.

- The Year 12 examination will be held from 7 to 17

February, 2022 and results are expected to be released on 6 April, 2022.

Based on best practices adopted by many countries, the syllabus was re-aligned this year to reduce the burden on our students.

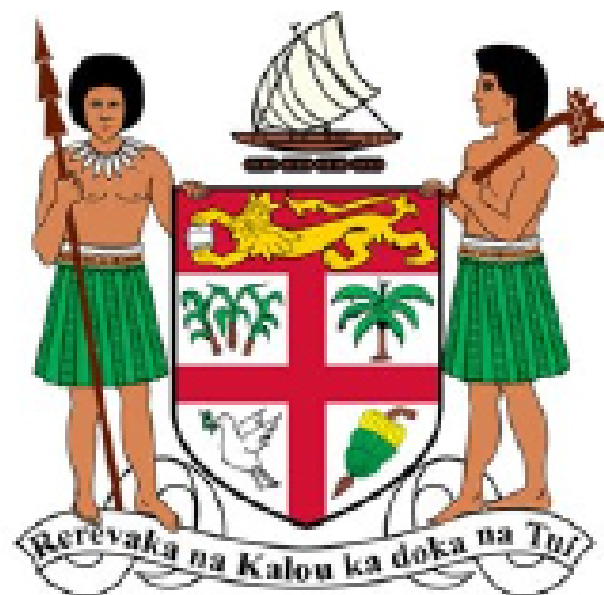
C. Reopening of Schools for ECE to Year 11

The decision to start face to face classes for Years 8 to 11 is based on the vaccination of our students who are 12 years and above. The staggered approach to re-opening of schools is being recommended as a cautious approach before all students enter schools for face to face learning. The Ministry's priority has always been the safety and security of students, teachers and ancillary staff. The following should be noted:

- Schools will resume for face to face classes for Years 8 – 11 on the same date as for Years 12 and 13, which is Tuesday, 4 January, 2022.

- The remote teaching and learning for ECE – Year 7 will resume from Tuesday, 4 January, 2022.

While vaccination is not mandatory, the Ministry is encouraging all parents of eligible students to get them vaccinated for their safety and for the safety of others. Min-



ister for Education, Premila Kumar said that the Year 2021 has been an extraordinary year for all Fijians and the Ministry understands that it is important for our teachers and students to take a break during this festive season. "After the break, when Years 12 and 13 return to school on 4 January, they will resume their revisions and preparation for the exams as they will have additional time to do so," added Minister Kumar. Heads of schools and primary school teachers have been trained on the Safe Reopening of Schools Protocol. Primary school teachers are required to prepare their schools for reopening and

MHMS will conduct an inspection before schools close on Friday, 17 December 2021, to ensure compliance with COVID-safe protocols. Schools were advised last month (October) to begin provisional enrolment for ECE, Year 1 and Year 9 for the new school year. Confirmation of places will be completed in February, 2022, giving ample time for parents/guardians to do their school shopping. The Minister has also encouraged parents and guardians to look after their children during the school break, and to keep them safe from potential freak accidents and abuse.

PM BAINIMARAMA RECEIVES WHO REPRESENTATIVE TO SOUTH PACIFIC

Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama received a courtesy call from the newly appointed World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to the South Pacific, Dr. Mark Jacobs this morning. In congratulating Dr. Jacobs on his new role, the Prime Minister reaffirmed the Fijian Government's commitment to increasing engagement with the WHO. The Prime Minister acknowledged, the valued contribution of the WHO towards Fiji's strategic priorities in alignment with our global commitments of providing Universal Health Coverage and Resilience to Climate change, achieving Global and Regional Immunisation Goals, and ensuring that Fiji is able to detect, assess and respond to common epidemic-prone diseases, amongst other key priorities. He extended his appreciation to the

WHO and to its Pacific Office for its timely support and assistance in Fiji's national response in times of natural disasters and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. The life-saving COVID-19 vaccines secured through the WHO's COVAX Facility granted Fiji, the first country in the Pacific, accessibility. The Prime Minister was pleased to share that Fiji has so far achieved a vaccination status of 90 percent coverage of our total targeted population and has put in place progressive steps to reopen Fiji's borders to the world next month, enabling the revival of employment, trade, tourism and ultimately rebuilding the Fijian economy. A feat only possible with the commitment and solidarity of our multilateral development partners such as the WHO. With the current challenges

faced globally, partnerships are more critical now, responding to the multi-dimensional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and respond to other global challenges. He thanked the WHO for applying a "Small Island Developing States lens" across programmes of work in recognition of the vulnerability of SIDS, facing unprecedented health challenges, compounded by the impact of climate change, and the socio-economic repercussions of the pandemic and existing chronic health issues. In June, the WHO convened the first SIDS Summit for Health, which brought SIDS leaders together to discuss the impact of the pandemic, on fragile and limited resources, with leaders acknowledging the need for comprehensive partnership and teamwork to ensure that SIDS are not left

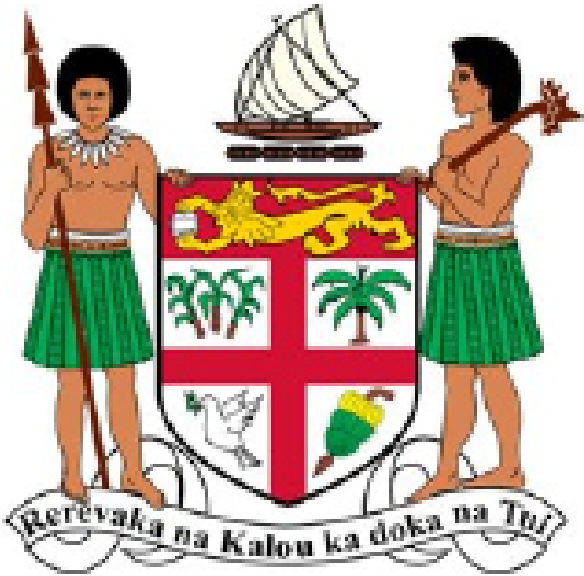
behind in our recovery. The Prime Minister, extended the Fijian Government's best wishes to Dr. Jacobs as he assumes his new role and assured the WHO Representative of Fiji's commitment to enhance collaboration for a resilient global recovery. Dr. Jacobs reaffirmed the WHO's commitment to further support the development of a robust health care system and advancement of health-related development goals, through stronger cooperation at all levels. Prior to his appointment as

the WHO Representative, Dr. Mark Jacobs has held a series of senior public health leadership roles. Dr. Jacobs was previously the WHO Representative to Lao People's Democratic Republic from November 2018 to August 2021. He was Acting Director of Programme Management for WHO in the Western Pacific Region from May to October 2018. He was also previously the Director of Communicable Diseases in the Region for 5 years.



Fiji News

PM BAINIMARAMA RECEIVES COURTESY CALL FROM THE UNICEF PACIFIC'S NEW REPRESENTATIVE



Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama received a courtesy call from the newly appointed UNICEF Representative for Pacific Island Countries, Mr. Jonathan Veitch this morning. In his opening remarks, Prime Minister Bainimarama congratulated Mr. Veitch on his new appointment and he reaffirmed the Fijian Government's commitment to work closely with the UNICEF Pacific Office to elevate engagement. Prime Minister Bainimarama acknowledged UNICEF's remarkable contributions to Fiji and the region, demonstrated by the number of UNICEF-supported programmes across various sectors including health, education, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene. UNICEF Pacific has also been instrumental in mobilising assistance for children and com-

munities in the aftermath of natural disasters and working with Government to provide technical assistance. The Prime Minister acknowledged UNICEF's continued support for Fiji's implementation of its obligations as a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). He also conveyed his appreciation to UNICEF for the swift assistance in the procurement and delivery of vaccines to the Pacific through the COVAX Facility as well as support to development of COVID-19 vaccine training materials and training of health workers. The Prime Minister said the ongoing partnership between Fiji and UNICEF is even more critical now, as the region comes together to respond to the multi-dimensional impacts of COVID-19 and other global challenges. He extended

the Fijian Government's best wishes to Mr. Veitch as he assumes his new role and assured the UNICEF Pacific Representative of Fiji's commitment to strengthen collaboration to achieve an inclusive and resilient recovery for the region and empowerment of children and their wellbeing. Reflecting on COP26, Prime Minister Bainimarama stated that it was pleasing to participate alongside young climate leaders at the global climate conference in Glasgow, while emphasising the important role young people have towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda. While confirming his participation at the first Global Forum on Children and Youth, hosted next month by UNICEF, Prime Minister Bainimarama said the event would draw the global attention on urgent needs of children and young people, and strengthen collaboration to collectively address the challenges, facing them. Mr. Veitch thanked the Fijian Government as well as other Pacific Island governments for supporting UNICEF's work in the region, and for giving priority to the promotion of children's rights. He said UNICEF stands ready to further support the Fijian Government's leadership in its ongoing response plans for COVID-19. "With the successful vaccination rate and campaign on how to be safe and

protected, no effort should be spared to reopen schools safely, as schools are critical for children's learning, safety, health, and well-being. We thank the Fijian Government for putting education and reopening of schools at the top of the COVID-19 recovery agenda," Mr. Veitch said. "The goal for all children in the Pacific to be able to enjoy their rights cannot be achieved in isolation. We will continue to work together to strengthen this partnership with the Fijian Government to ensure that we are able to provide the best future for our leaders of tomorrow – the children," he added. The UNICEF Pacific Representative has congratulated the Fijian Government on advancing the Convention on the Rights of the Child through the recent passing of the Climate Change Act 2021, Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Registration of Sex Offenders Act 2021, all of which bear significant importance for children's rights in Fiji. To date, Fiji has received a total of 309,280 doses via COVAX, including 100 per cent of their allocated doses to cover 20 per cent of the population, as well as dose-sharing vaccines through the COVAX Facility from the Government of the United States, Government of Japan and the Government of New Zealand. UNICEF and WHO have been supporting the Ministry of Health and Medical

Services on communication and community engagement for the COVID-19 pandemic response to increase demand for COVID-19 vaccines while tackling misinformation on vaccines. UNICEF has also been working to provide essential medical equipment and supplies, guidance on reopening of schools, and support to address water, sanitation and hygiene needs, child protection, mental well-being, nutrition as well as important communication messaging on keeping safe during the pandemic. UNICEF is working closely with the Government Ministries and other partners, including development partners and civil society organizations, to ensure the protection and safety of children, their families, and communities. As the UNICEF Pacific Representative, Mr. Veitch will oversee UNICEF programmes and operations in Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. He was appointed to the position of UNICEF Pacific Representative in August 2021 and he is based in Suva, Fiji. Prior to this current appointment, Mr. Veitch was the Deputy Director of the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division at UNICEF, based in Geneva, responsible for the relationship with UNICEF's 33 National Committees.

MINISTER REDDY LAUNCHES TWO RISE BEYOND THE REEF FARMERS' CLUSTERS

The intent of the Rise beyond the Reef farming ventures has garnered praise, as it complements the Ministry of Agriculture's main priority of expanding commercial agriculture. This was shared by Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Dr. Mahendra Reddy earlier this week in Marinitawa, Ba while launching two farmers' clusters supported by local non-governmental organisation Rise Beyond The Reef. The Rise Beyond The Reef Marinitawa Farmers' Cluster and Rise Beyond The Reef Yakete Cluster

comprising of 150 women from the village of Yakete in Ba was launched by Minister Reddy. "What you are doing fits in well with our number one strategic objective, which is expanding commercial agriculture so we are very pleased to be here today to witness the launch of your cluster," he said. "For any venture to be successful, you must keep all the data recorded safely. Although I understand that you have free labor that you are using, I suggest that you draw up proper financial records and labour costs so that you can determine what

the profit scenario would look like if you were without that labour." In addition, the Minister highlighted the importance of treating farms and agricultural projects as businesses rather than social projects since the risk of the project collapsing was high due to a lack of project guidelines drawn up at the outset. "I am glad that you have chosen crops such as turmeric, ginger, cassava, and I recommend that you also consider planting duruka and squash, since there is a high demand for squash in the export market." Minister Reddy

has also offered the Rise Beyond the Reef farmers' cluster a second-hand tractor with a two-disc plough to assist with land preparation. The cluster has been informed to pay for a third of the cost at \$5,500.00 to receive the tractor. The Ministry of Agriculture will also assist the cluster and group with organic agricultural practices to ensure the turmeric grown by the cluster remain organic. Minister Reddy advised the clusters to use organic manure to fertilise their fields instead of chemical fertilisers, stating that the Ministry would also provide

Bacterium Culture to boost their composting efforts and upscale their organic manure for their farm use. "We're happy to provide this support," he said. Rise Beyond The Reef Co-Founder Semi Lotawa acknowledged the advice given by Minister Reddy and said "Thank you for the words of advice you gave for us; this is a new path for us, and regardless of how we do it, we aim to contribute to reviving Fiji's agriculture sector, from the highlands to the sugarcane belts."

Fiji News

FIJI WORKS WITH ITS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS FOR THE SAFE REOPENING OF BORDERS

Fiji is working closely with its development partners both locally and internationally, to prepare for safe reopening of borders and ultimately advance collaboration for a resilient and inclusive economic recovery. This message was conveyed today at a virtual meeting convened by the Permanent Secretary Office of the Prime Minister, Sugar Industry and Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Yogesh Karan with Fiji's Honorary Consuls in the

United States of America and Canada. The briefing provided an opportunity for Fiji to take stock of current areas of collaboration while exploring avenues for enhanced partnerships with USA and Canada, as Fiji prepares to reopen its borders next month. Mr. Karan outlined the consolidated efforts taken by Fiji to ensure implementation of protocols during safe reopening and revival of Fiji's tourism industry. He said Fiji is grateful to its development

partners for their tremendous support, enabling Fiji to prepare for the reopening of borders and with increased collaboration, Fiji aims to maximise opportunities for investment, trade and tourism. In acknowledging Fiji's cordial relations with United States and Canada, Mr. Karan said there are on-going discussions between the Governments of USA and Canada to deepen the levels of engagements in economic and political cooperation. Mr. Karan

acknowledged Fiji's Honorary Consuls for their effort and timely assistance in reaching out to support Fiji's response during times of natural disasters and COVID-19 pandemic. On behalf of the Prime Minister, he extended Fiji's appreciation to the Honorary Consuls, all the stakeholders and the Fijian diaspora in US, Canada, including all those around the world for their commitment and service to Fiji. Mr. Karan said Fiji is grateful for the generosity and

solidarity demonstrated by the Fijian diaspora and Honorary Consuls in mobilising collective support and commitment to help Fiji build back better through stronger cooperation. In response, Fiji's Honorary Consuls thanked Mr. Karan for the comprehensive discussions and reaffirmed their support for the Fijian Government's work in rebuilding the economy, particularly in the tourism and investment sectors.

FIJIAN PACIFIC LABOUR SCHEME WORKER FULFILLS FAMILY DREAM

A Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) meat worker, Peni Ramanumanu fulfilled his family dream after 10 months of engagement as a meat worker in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia. Mr Ramanumanu, who is from Nakoroivau in the province of Tailevu, was one of the workers mobilized to Wagga Wagga in January this year. During his first 10 months of engagement, Ramanumanu managed to save \$17,000 FJD as building material costs for the construction of his house. "Prior to leaving Fiji, we discussed as a family that our main goal during my first year of engagement is to build a better house for my family," said Ramanumanu. "I managed to acquire enough savings and we constructed our dream house within a month's time. This was possible through commitment and staying focused on the goal." "One must have a clear mindset, minimise unnecessary spending, focus on

the need and not on the luxury things of life," he emphasised. Ramanumanu commended the Money Minders training conducted by ANZ during the Pre-Departure Orientation training that assisted him, especially on creating vision boards to map out saving plans during their three years of employment. He also acknowledged the valuable advice given by his Italian workmate who advised him to live within his means; avoid impulsive buying; refrain from buying expensive things or rush into buying cars. He also thanked his family members for their commitment, dedication and support towards achieving their family goal and for having faith in him. "I wish to thank my employer, Regional Workforce Management (RWM) and the Fijian Government for the great employment opportunity that I was able to achieve my goal." "My sincere appreciation also goes out to the Fijian families in



Griffith for their support and assistance towards the Fijian PLS workers here in Wagga Wagga. Ramanumanu's advice to potential and other aspiring PLS Fijian workers before entering Australia for employment opportunity is to set clear goals, remain focused, be well-disciplined and practice time man-

agement. Ramanumanu hopes that the house will inspire Fijian workers who are part of the scheme to manage their finances wisely and refocus on the goals they originally set out to achieve

Prior to getting selected under the PLS program, Ramanumanu worked as a sales representative for a business in Nausori

before being laid off in 2019 due to the pandemic. The Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports Parveen Kumar Bala added that his NEC Team have now resumed taking PLS face-to-face registration in all their offices with strict COVID-19 protocols observed.

FIJI'S AMBASSADOR TO THE UAE ACCORDED WITH 50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL

Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama on behalf of His Excellency the President conferred Fiji's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, Naipote Tako Katonitabua with the 50th Independence Anniversary Medal for his remarkable service and contribution to Fiji's development. The former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and Director CATD in Nadave, was honoured to be recognised

amongst other outstanding Diplomats who have also been acknowledged for their exemplary dedication to serving Fijians and Fiji in the international arena. In congratulating Ambassador Katonitabua, Prime Minister Bainimarama said it was befitting for the Head of the UAE Mission to be acknowledged for his contributions to the development of Fiji over the years. The Head of Government also wished the Mission well in

representing Fiji at the World Expo which is one of the oldest and largest international events on the planet, taking place every five years. The Expo 2021 which is currently hosted by Dubai from 1 October, 2021 to 31 March, 2022 will have country pavilions, a first in the history of any World Expo and countries like Fiji will offer their own culturally immersive experiences for Expo visitors.



Fiji News

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR LITERACY AND NUMERACY CURRICULUM FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS DISCUSSED



The Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Premila Kumar met with a team from the Fiji Education Programme (Fiji Program Support Facility), a team from the PacREF (Pacific Regional Education Framework 2030) project, the Ministry's curriculum specialists, and Senior Ministry officials regarding the revised literacy and numeracy curriculum in primary schools and its implementation plan. This was the first meeting of key stakeholders to discuss the limitations in the current primary curriculum and how the revised curriculum will address the gaps. Some areas that have been strengthened are clearer progressive learning and the use of meta-language, clearer vocabulary and inquiry-based pedagogical approaches, amongst other things. During her opening remarks, Minister Kumar discussed the Govern-

ment's vision for education in Fiji and why revisions to the numeracy and literacy curriculum, along with other education initiatives, are essential to achieving the Government's vision of "transforming Fiji." "Quality education and training play a key role in enhancing the capacities of our people towards improving quality of lives and contributing to the socio-economic development of the country," said Minister Kumar. "The Fijian Government is focused on quality education to create a more skilled and adaptable workforce and a knowledge-based society. A number of initiatives have been introduced to improve the quality of education in Fiji." "The Government invests significant funds in education each year with the provision of Free Education Grants, bus fare assistance, and free textbooks, so the burden of edu-

cating our children is removed from our parents and education can be accessed by all students, regardless of their location or socioeconomic position," Minister Kumar added. "Similarly, the burden to maintain the school infrastructure is shared with the community-owned schools". Minister Kumar also emphasised on the importance of focusing on the quality and relevance of education, along with learning pathways, student well-being, and teacher professionalism to realise the vision stated in the National Development Plan. She added that we needed to move away from rote learning and concentrating only on exam based approach, and to make learning more contextual and fun for students. As part of this revision, comprehensive and detailed teachers' guides have been developed along with the syllabus. The importance of

these guides was highlighted for the benefit of educators in remote areas who do not normally get much opportunity to engage in professional development. The teachers' guides will provide an important tool in teaching this revised curriculum. One of the more significant changes that has been brought about in the Math curriculum are opportunities for students at an early age to investigate, ask questions, and develop critical thinking. A highly effective method that is engaged in literacy is inquiry based learning. Minister Kumar said that Literacy and Numeracy play a pivotal role in an individual's life because of its usage in daily life, so teaching has to be in the context of normal, day-to-day life. Helping someone to read and write effectively or acquire the basic Math and English skills that so many of us take for granted, improves the future of everyone in society. Last year, the DFAT-funded Fiji Education Programme developed the revised English and Maths curriculum for primary schools and now, work on the secondary English and Maths curriculum has started and is expected to be completed in 2023. The Minister also stated that Literacy and Numeracy are critical to economic development as well as individual and community well-being. Unsurprisingly, poor Literacy and Numeracy skills have a negative impact on workers' performance. The Minister expressed her appreciation for the partnership of the stakeholders,

especially DFAT, for coming on board to better our Literacy and Numeracy curriculum, and encouraged everyone to keep engaged with each other as this work is taken forward. There was overall excitement in the forum about the revised curriculum and the approach to learning. At the same time, the meeting also discussed that the only way to get the best out of this revised curriculum is to provide constant support to teachers to teach effectively. The meeting included discussions on a number of ways in which teachers will be trained to ensure that teachers had training opportunities regardless of where they may be located. Heads of Schools are expected to play an important role in the rollout of this curriculum, as leaders in their schools. For the long term development of teachers, the Teacher Training Institutions will need to work on the new teaching approaches that the Ministry is now including in its curriculum delivery. As part of this initiative, there will be Literacy and Numeracy Progress Trackers to monitor and evaluate the learning outcomes so there can be a continuous improvement over time. "We are happy with the discussions today and look forward to implementing the newly revised curriculum. I do want to emphasise here the role that parents can play in their children's learning in this curriculum and this will further enhance their children's eLearning," Minister Kumar said.

FIJIANS IN UNITED STATES RECOGNISED WITH 50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS

Permanent Secretary Office of the Prime Minister, Sugar Industry and Permanent Secretary Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yogesh Karan congratulated Fiji's Honorary Consul Mr. Jay Singh and Professor Roy Krishna for their exemplary service and dedication to Fiji's development. Mr. Karan whilst speaking at a ceremony in which Fiji's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Satyendra Prasad on behalf of His Excellency the President conferred Fiji's 50th Anniversary medals, acknowledged the

two men's outstanding achievements. Professor Roy Krishna was recognised for his distinguished career and contributions to medical education, research, and development internationally and for sharing those experiences back in Fiji, notably with restructuring of Fiji School of Medicine within the new National University of Fiji and also for the development of Medical Health Sciences Program launched this year at the University of Fiji's Umanand Prasad School of Medicine (UPSM). Fiji's Honorary Consul in San

Francisco Mr. Jay Singh was acknowledged for his tireless efforts in mobilising timely assistance with the support of US community towards Fiji's recovery efforts following two devastating cyclones in Fiji. He was also recognised for his achievements and contribution to Fiji's tourism and business sector investment. While congratulating both Fijians, Mr. Karan said they have demonstrated passion and perseverance to serve the less fortunate and whilst they have attained success in their fields internationally, they have not

forgotten Fiji and they continue to reach out and serve. He said both men are great examples of Fiji's Foreign policy at work and the Fijian Government is committed to working with its vast diaspora to further advance Fiji's social and economic development. Additionally, Mr. Karan said Fiji is incredibly proud of the appointment by UN Secretary-General of Ms. Unaisi Lutu Vuniwaqa as the Assistant Secretary-General for Safety and Security in the UN's Department of Safety and Security. While extending the Fijian

Government's congratulations and best wishes to Ms Unaisi Vuniwaqa for her new role, Mr. Karan said that Ms Vuniwaqa is a fantastic role model for Fijians and Pacific Islanders and her exemplary leadership is a great motivation for Fijians and for youths that with dedication, hard work and perseverance we can achieve the best for our nation. Both Mr. Singh and Professor Krishna expressed their appreciation for the support provided by the Fijian Government, families and friends in Fiji and around the world.

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World News

India's population has started to decline, fertility rate below replacement level

Latest findings in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) released by the Union Health Ministry on November 24 indicates that India's population rate has started to decline. As per the survey, the average number of children per woman or the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) as it is known, has declined to a 2 from 2.2 (last reported in 2015-16). The United Nations' population division explains that countries experiencing replacement fertility below 2.1 children per woman indicates that a generation is not producing enough children to replace itself, which will eventually lead to reduction in population. The replacement fertility level is usually fixed at 2.1, since it is the average number of children per woman that is needed to keep a balance between the number of births and deaths in a country to maintain the population. The National Family Health Survey is conducted at an all-India level. The latest edition of this survey is the fifth in the survey series. The survey also stated the state-wise

TFR, according to which only five states have the Total Fertility Rate above 2 - Bihar (3), Meghalaya (2.9), Uttar Pradesh (2.4), Jharkhand (2.3) and Manipur (2.2). Five states have a TFR of 1.9 - Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Mizoram and Uttarakhand Six states have a TFR of 1.8 - Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Telangana Six states have a TFR of 1.7 - Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Tripura Two states have a TFR of 1.6 - Maharashtra and West Bengal And two states have a TFR at the same level as the national average, namely - Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan Other finding from the survey include - Significant progress has been recorded between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 with respect to women operating bank accounts from 53 per cent to 79 per cent at all-India level, the survey states - Improved sex ratio: India now has more women than men for the first time. According to NFHS-3 (con-



ducted in 2005-06), the ratio was equal, 1000: 1000; it went down to 991:1000 in 2015-16 in NFHS-4. For the first time, the NFHS-5 shows that the numbers are favouring women. The current population of India is close to 1,398,902,101 and counting and this accounts for 17.7% of the total world population. The country ranks at number 2 after China in the list of countries ranked by population. If the numbers continue to increase

then, India will be the most populous country in the world by the turn of the century. Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, was the first who set the ball rolling on curbing the population in the state when in June 2021, he introduced the phased implementation of a two-child policy in the state. Following this, the Uttar Pradesh government in July 2021 introduced a Population Policy which aims to bring down the total fertility

rate (TFR) among women to 2.1 by 2026 and to 1.9 by 2030 in the state. While explaining the reason behind taking such steps, senior UP minister Sidharth Nath Singh had said that 240 million people live in the state, UP accounts for 16% of the total population in India. He further said, if it was a separate country, UP would have been at number 5 after China, India, US and Indonesia.

On the brink: On Russia-Ukraine border conflict

The massive mobilisation of Russian troops on the Ukraine border and occasional outbreak of violence along the line of contact between the Russia-backed rebels in the contested Donbass region and Ukrainian troops have pushed both countries to the brink of an open conflict. There were similar scenes earlier this year, but Moscow, after U.S. diplomatic intervention, pulled back. This time, however, the more emphatic Russian moves appear to be part of a larger strategy of force-projection across Russia's western perimeter, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. On the EU's Polish border, Belarus, a Russian ally, was blamed for orchestrating a migration crisis. Amid tensions, Russia flew bombers near Poland's borders earlier this month. In the Black Sea, Russian President Vladimir Putin dispatched vessels to shadow U.S. warships. The U.S. has warned its allies of a possible Russian attack on Ukraine. Russia's aggressiveness could have partly been driven by Mr.

Putin's assessment that the U.S. was strategically weakened after its Afghan withdrawal and its preoccupation with China's rise in East Asia. This gives him a window of opportunity to reassert Russian primacy in its backyard which has seen significant NATO advances. This makes Ukraine, which Russia sees, according to scholars at Carnegie, "as a Western aircraft carrier parked just across southern Russia", at the centre of Russia's geopolitical tussle with the West. In 2015, an open conflict was averted after the 'Minsk II' peace agreement was signed, under the mediation of France and Germany. It was designed to end the fighting in the rebel regions and hand over the border to Ukraine's national troops. Ukraine was required to delegate more power to the breakaway regions and introduce constitutional reforms, codifying their special status. Russia's nod for the agreement was possibly because it thought that delegation of power to the rebels would enhance Mos-

cow's leverage that it could use to prevent Ukraine's full integration with the West. But Kiev's reluctance to implement the agreement and its growing military, economic and political ties with the West seem to have prompted Mr. Putin to change his approach — to putting Kiev under direct military pressure. Kiev is now in a tough spot. It lacks the military resources to deter its giant neighbour. While it gets military supplies from the West, there is no guarantee that the West would come to its help in the event of a Russian invasion. On the other side, Russia might make tactical gains from an invasion, like it did from the annexation of Crimea in 2014, but such a move could further deteriorate its already ruptured ties with the West. So a practical solution is to revive the Minsk peace process. The West should push both sides to resume talks and live up to their commitments as per the Minsk agreement to restore relative peace on the border.



TRAVELLING TO FIJI

Let us make planning your trip to our Home just a bit easier. Here is everything you need to know to get you ready for Fiji.



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As you book your ticket out to Fiji with Fiji Airways, please:

- ✓ Check your country's travel requirements to and from Fiji
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with entry requirements for Fiji's Travel Partner countries
- ✓ Book with a Care Fiji Committed Certified resort or an approved transfer or tour operator. [Click Here](#)
- ✚ Travellers entering Fiji must have medical travel insurance, with international coverage that covers COVID-19 before travelling.



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

We can't wait to welcome you on-board, so please don't forget the following:

- ✓ Provide proof of your full vaccination with a Fiji recognised vaccine (Astra-Zeneca, Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines)
- ✓ Produce a negative RT-PCR test 3 days prior to boarding your flight.
- ✓ Present a confirmed booking (at least 3 Nights) with a certified CFC accommodation provider before boarding your flight.
- ✓ Download and activate the careFIJI contact tracing app to use in Fiji.
- ✗ Defer travel if you're symptomatic or feel unwell.
- ✚ For travellers coming to Fiji for holiday purposes, please show evidence of adequate medical insurance



ON HOLIDAY

Whenever you're in public, please practice these simple steps to keep yourself and others safe:

- ✓ Take a rapid COVID-19 test at your certified CFC accommodation provider 48 hours after your arrival in Fiji.
- ✓ Use only CFC approved tourism operators and experiences in the first 48 hours
- ✓ Follow Fiji's COVID-safe protocols (mask and social distancing where appropriate, check in to the careFIJI app)
- ✓ Please avoid vulnerable communities in "low vaccination" zones.
- ✓ Be prepared to provide proof of vaccination on request.



RETURNING HOME

Moce mada and see you again soon. Keep your return home as stress free as possible by:

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DECEMBER 2021 - HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Whether you own a home or looking to buy or sell one, here are the latest Good To Know articles for when you're ready to take the next step in finding your Forever Home.

HOMEBUYERS AND HOMEOWNERS

**WHY A WAVE OF FORECLOSURES IS NOT ON THE WAY**

With forbearance plans coming to an end, many are concerned the housing market will experience a wave of foreclosures similar to what happened after the housing bubble 15 years ago. Here are a few reasons why that won't happen.

There are fewer homeowners in trouble this time - As of last Friday, the total number of mortgages still in forbearance stood at 1,221,000. That's far fewer than the 9.3 million households that lost their homes just over a decade ago.

Most of the mortgages in forbearance have enough equity to sell their homes - The probable number of foreclosures coming out of the forbearance program is nowhere near the number of foreclosures that impacted the housing crash 15 years ago. It's actually less than one-third of any of the three years prior to the pandemic.

The current market can absorb listings coming to the market - When foreclosures hit the market back in 2008, there was an oversupply of houses for sale. It's exactly the opposite today. In 2008, there was over a nine-month supply of listings on the market. Today, that number is less than a 3-month supply.

Bottom Line - *"The likelihood of us having a foreclosure crisis"*

FINANCE, HOMEBUYERS, HOMEOWNERS

**WAYS YOUR MONTHLY PAYMENTS CAN CHANGE**

This is one of the best times to get a fixed-rate mortgage. Since interest rates have hovered near record lows for years, they're bound to go up rather than further down. A safe option is a fixed-rate mortgage that never changes over the life of the loan. Even so, your monthly payment can change in other ways.

If you put less than 20 percent of your home's purchase price as a down payment, lenders will require that you pay for private mortgage insurance (PMI). Expect your payments to rise by 0.3 percent to 1.2 percent of the loan amount. In some cases, PMI can be removed after a given period, so ask your lender how to do so.

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Fiji News

WORKSHOP TO REVIEW THE NATIONAL TSUNAMI WARNING AND RESPONSE STANDARD OPERATION PROCEDURE (SOP)

The Ministry for Lands and Mineral Resources in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (UNESCO-IOC) commenced a four-day workshop from 16th to 19th November to review the National Tsunami Warning and Response Standard Operation Procedure (SOP). The workshop was officially opened by the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources (MLMR), Mr Jale Kunawalu and anticipates that the outcome is directly aligned to the National Risk Reduction Policy (NDRRP) and the 5-Year & 20 Year National Development Plan. Mr Kunawalu highlighted the importance of reviewing the tsunami warning and response

SOP given Fiji's current effort to upgrade the national seismic network and the extension of the tsunami siren network from Suva to Rakiraki. The review will enable Fiji to have a strengthened end-to-end tsunami early warning system. The workshop also allows the Mineral Resources Department (MRD) and the Emergency Response Planning Unit of the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) to reassess the tsunami warning criteria and products for the enhancement of the tsunami siren SOP and the 2017 National Tsunami Response Plan. The workshop participants were mostly from the Seismology unit of the MRD and the Emergency Response Planning Unit of the NDMO.

The SOP review is facilitated by members of the Intergovern-



mental Coordination Group for the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (ICG/PTWS) - Dr Laura Kong, Director, International Tsunami Information Centre (ITIC) Hawaii; Mr Charles McCreery, Director, Pacific Tsunami

Warning Centre (PTWC); Mr Stuart Weinstein, Deputy Director, Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre; Dr Bill Fry, Lead Geophysicist, GNS New Zealand and Mr Jiuta Korovulava, Tsunami Unit Programme Officer at Intergovernmental

Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (UNESCO-IOC). The Tsunami Warning and Response SOP review workshop is supported by UNESCO-IOC in collaboration with the Mineral Resources Department.

GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO LEAVING NO FIJIAN BEHIND

The Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme through the funding from the Government of Japan coordinated a 2 weeks REACH programme in Nadi from 25th October to 5th November. The REACH program known as the "Rights, Empowerment and Cohesion" is a mobile based service with the goal of making efficient and timely services a reality for both rural and urban communities. The REACH programme promotes the Fijian Government's vision of "Inclusive Socio-economic Development" ensuring that no Fijian is left behind.

Stakeholders that were part of the mobile service included the Fijian Elections Office, the Ministry of Justice (Births, Death & Marriage Office), the

Ministry of Health, Medical Services Pacific, the Fiji Police Force, the Fijian Competition and the Consumer Commission, the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Spinal Injury Association, Empower Pacific, Fiji Water Authority, the United Nations Development programme and the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. During the two weeks of awareness, an estimated 2368 individuals had accessed the services provided through the Reach Programme platform. Mr. Ramesh Singh and Jaint Lata of Narewa were pleased as they were one of the 1426 individuals able to get their voter cards update at a location which was very convenient to them. Ms. Delores Rachel, teacher at Ratu Navula College said "as a working woman and a mother sometimes it is



difficult to find time to visit medical centers, thus mobile programmes like REACH are vital in ensuring women of nearby communities have access to medical check-up." She is thankful to the Govern-

ment of Japan, UNDP and the Fijian Government through the Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation for the initiative. After the successful completion of the REACH awareness in the District Nadi

and Sikituru, the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in partnership with UNDP will be conducting a similar programme in other province and districts.

DAWASAMU AGRICULTURE STATION COMMISSIONED

The Ministry of Agriculture's Dawasamu Station which suffered major structural damages during Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016 was commissioned yesterday. The newly commissioned Dawasamu Agriculture Station and Quarters was designed according to Category 5 building standards to withstand future natural disasters of the same ferocity. While offici-

ating at the commissioning of the station in Dawasamu, Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Dr. Mahendra Reddy said Government's focus remained on bringing services closer to all Fijians, regardless of geographical location. "Even if you are right here in the interior or any farmer for that matter, even if they are situated far from the main business centers,

you are not forgotten, and you will never be forgotten," he said. "The services available for your fellow Fijians living in urban areas will be available here as well for your convenience." Minister Reddy said the commissioning of the station and the quarters was also a sign of renewed vigor from the Ministry' perspective and an indicator of its commitment

to service delivery. Additionally, he called on all farmers in Dawasamu to maximise the Ministry's presence by taking advantage of the opportunities that are available for Fiji's local agriculture sector and to supply the demand for local agricultural produce in all markets, including the export market. "Over the last 18 months, we have seen a massive movement

of people, instead of a rural to urban drift, it was a back to rural movement because people realised that through agriculture, they had a secure source of livelihood. The strategic advantages that are available within the sector and COVID has revealed that if you take up agriculture, you have control over your life and your future," he said.

Fiji News

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, HERITAGE & ARTS PROVIDES CLARIFICATION

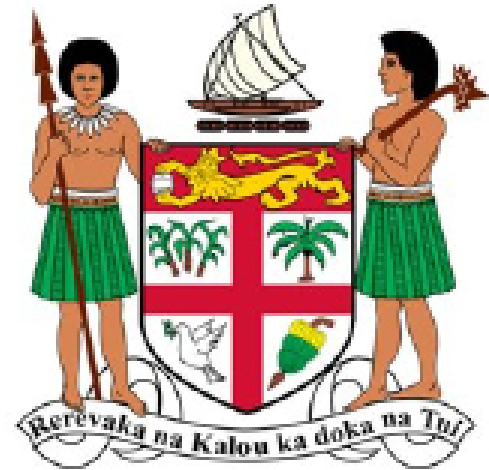
The Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts would like to provide clarification on queries raised by FTU, following the Press Conference on the 18th of November 2021. The Ministry appreciates and continues to support and acknowledge the good work that teachers are carrying out in schools. Our teachers are our biggest assets. There is no doubt that teachers play a significant role in the success of any ongoing educational reforms. Hence, the Ministry is committed to ensuring quality workforce that will contribute towards achieving quality education for our children. Regarding salary, teachers with degree and teacher training qualifications (education units including practicum) are paid between the salary range of \$22,528.74 to \$26,283.53 per annum. The Ministry regrets if this has caused confusion as only the upper range was mentioned during the Press Conference. It should also be noted that the starting salary of Assistant

Head Teachers (AHT) salary is based on the classification of the school size, i.e. medium and large. For example, AHTs who were on salary grade (ED4A and ED5D) transited to Band G Step 2 which is \$32,038.10. To support teachers' professional development, Government has allocated In-Service Scholarships for Bachelor's Degree in Special and Inclusive Education, Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education and Diploma/Bachelors in Counselling and Psychology in this financial year. It is to be noted that the teacher training programmes are offered in flexible mode which our teachers are using to study. Over the past 4 years, the Ministry has upgraded the salaries of 1,454 teachers who have upgraded their qualifications and we strongly encourage other teachers to continue upgrading their qualifications to keep abreast with the developments in the education sector through professional development. The Fiji Teachers

Registration Authority Act 2008 Part 19 Section 2 states that professional development is a requirement for the renewal of teacher registration certificates. To allay any confusion on fully qualified teacher, the following aspects are required to be called a fully-qualified teacher: Education – relevant education units including classroom assessment (practicum).

Subject content. Clarification on fully qualified and assistant teacher requirements are as follows: Fully Qualified teacher – ECE – Bachelor of Education ECE SIE- Bachelor of Special and Inclusive Education

Primary - Bachelor of Education Primary Secondary – Bachelor of Education Secondary or Bachelor's degree in subject field plus an appropriate qualification in education such as Secondary Teacher Training Certificate [STTC], Graduate Certificate in Education [GCED] and Diploma in Education/Teaching. Assistant Teacher – A Diploma



in Education/Teaching with practicum). The Ministry further clarifies that practicum is an important component of teacher training programme. It helps student teachers to understand the full scope of a teacher's role in teaching and managing students. Teachers with Diploma and Certificate level qualifications are advised to upgrade their qualifications if they wish to receive higher salary as per the Teacher Remuneration Setting Policy either to progress to higher positions, or to compete in a teaching field

where there are more graduates fully qualified to teach in certain discipline. Permanent Secretary Dr Anjeela Jokhan stated that the Ministry as an employer is looking at all teacher grievances including salary anomalies based on established procedures. Therefore, she is requesting teachers to liaise with the Ministry. The Ministry will investigate all grievances and act accordingly. Dr. Jokhan reiterated that the Fijian Government had increased salaries of teachers and post holders twice in the last 7 years.

NEW PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT FISHER CO-OPERATIVES AND ASSOCIATIONS

Owing to a strong shared commitment to strengthening grassroot communities, the Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport (Ministry) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, have signed a Letter of Agreement. The Agreement reaffirms the existing working relationship to assist fisher co-operatives and associations and in the development of training modules and materials. This partnership aims to empower co-operatives and associations to:

- Understand processes and responsibilities of becoming a registered fisher group;
- Build capacity on basic accounting, bookkeeping and financial management;
- Learn various methods of fish preservation post-harvest;
- Understand proper hygiene for fish and maintenance of equipment; and
- Recognise the need to sustain and manage marine re-

sources.

In highlighting the Ministry's previous collaboration with FAO, the Minister for Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport, Faiyaz Koya, highlighted the importance of this cooperation. "Strategic partnership has long formed the foundation of the Fijian Government's programmes – especially on income generating projects that focus on food security." "Our renewed partnership with the FAO demonstrates confidence in our programmes and we are excited to be working with them to strengthen our grassroot fisher co-operatives and associations. This gives us another opportunity to leverage our shared resources, strengths and expertise," highlighted Minister Koya. Assistant FAO Representative to Fiji, Ms Joann Young, says that FAO is looking forward to strengthening collaboration with the Fijian Government. "Based on our past success-



ful partnerships, we are once again delighted to work with the Ministry to strengthen the sustainability practices of our fisher folks to improve food and nutrition security," Young said. The Acting Permanent Secretary for Fisheries, Mr. Pene Baleinabuli was also present today and shared similar views. "For Civil Servants to

help Fiji make the transition into a sustainable economy and an inclusive and progressive nation, we have to keep challenging ourselves to be ready to absorb the assistance that organisations like the FAO bring to the table," said Acting Permanent Secretary Baleinabuli. Fiji is one of the participating countries under FAO's Tech-

nical Cooperation Programme "Mapping and characterization of Fishers and Fish Workers Organizations in selected Pacific Island Countries". These countries include Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Federated State of Micronesia, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Cook Islands, Samoa and Tuvalu.

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Health

Social media use linked to depression in adults

While social media has been widely linked to anxiety and depression in teenagers, new evidence suggests that platforms such as TikTok and Instagram can leave middle-aged adults feeling sad, too. The research, published Tuesday in the medical journal JAMA Network Open, is based on a series of surveys of 5,395 adults whose average age was 56. The surveys, conducted from May 2020 through May this year, began as a way for researchers to learn more about how adults were coping throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Over time, researchers increasingly became interested in whether social media use might be linked to changes in mental health. "We were asking people who weren't depressed about their social media use," said Dr. Roy Perlis, one of the study's authors. "Then we came back later to see if the people who were using certain kinds of social media were more likely to be depressed." Compared to adults who did not use social media, "people who were using Facebook, people who were using

TikTok, and people who were using Snapchat were substantially more likely to come back and tell us they felt depressed the next time they filled out the survey," said Perlis, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital. The research does not prove social media causes depression. Indeed, it is possible that people already prone to feeling sad were more likely to log on to such sites.

But it adds to evidence of a growing mental health crisis in the United States. Nearly one-third of American adults reported feeling depressed in an October study, up from 8.5 percent before the pandemic. Survey respondents who had minimal symptoms of depression early on were more likely to report an increase in symptoms in later surveys if they used social media. The research is limited in that it cannot tease out what kinds of content people were exposed to or sought out online. And previous research has shown an overall increase in social media use over the past year. Outside

experts theorize that seeing others enjoying life or otherwise seemingly living their best lives on social media may remind people of what they've been missing this past year. Remember that social media tends to act as a kind of "sizzle reel" for people, advised Mitch Prinstein, chief science officer for the American Psychological Association. "Our brains were not built for this kind of social interaction. And social media is kind of hijacking the need for social interaction with something very artificial and insufficient," he said. "Social media is the empty calories of social interaction." Rachel Wu, an associate professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside, agreed. Social media may be "filling a void, but it's not doing a very good job," she said. Neither Wu nor Prinstein were involved in the new research. Perlis said his team found the association between social media use and increased symptoms of depression even after accounting for factors such as isolation during the pandemic. The research also found



age differences in how certain platforms impacted mental health. Depressive symptoms were more commonly reported among Facebook users under age 35 than older adults. The opposite was true for users of Snapchat and TikTok: more depressive symptoms were reported among people over age 35. The reasons for such findings were unclear. It could be that because Snapchat and TikTok are more visual medi-

ums, perhaps affecting older adults differently. Or it could suggest that a person is out of sync with his or her peers. Perlis said more research is needed to interpret the results appropriately. Ultimately, experts recommend remaining mindful of time spent on social media. "The programs are designed to keep you on as long as possible," Prinstein said. "Try to be aware of how much time you're spending on them."

Health

Covid: New variant classed 'of concern' and named Omicron

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a new coronavirus variant to be "of concern" and named it Omicron. It had a large number of mutations, and early evidence suggested an increased reinfection risk, the WHO said. It was first reported to the WHO from South Africa on 24 November, and has also been identified in Botswana, Belgium, Hong Kong and Israel. A number of countries around the world have now decided to ban or restrict travel to and from southern Africa. Travellers from South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini will not be able to enter the UK unless they are UK or Irish nationals, or UK residents. US officials said flights from South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mozambique and Malawi would be blocked, mirroring earlier moves taken by the EU. It will come into effect on Monday. 'Bad news - but not doomsday' On Friday, the WHO said the number of cases of this variant, initially named B.1.1.529, appeared to be increasing in almost all of South Africa's provinces. "This variant has a large number of mutations, some of which are concerning," the UN public



health body said in a statement. It said "the first known confirmed B.1.1.529 infection was from a specimen collected on 9 November". The WHO said it would take a few weeks to understand the impact of the new variant, as scientists worked to determine how transmissible it was. A top UK health official warned that vaccines would "almost certainly" be less effective against the new variant. But Professor James Naismith, a structural biologist

from the University of Oxford, added: "It is bad news but it's not doomsday." He said mutations in the variant suggested it may spread more quickly - but transmissibility "is not just as simple as 'this amino acid does this'" and was determined by how mutations worked together. Only about 24% of South Africa's population is fully vaccinated, which could spur a rapid spread of cases there, Dr Mike Tildesley, a member of the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Modelling group (Spi-M), told the BBC on Friday. Meanwhile, US infectious disease chief Dr Anthony Fauci said that while the reports on the new variant threw up a "red flag", it was possible that vaccines might still work to prevent serious illness. "Until it's properly tested... we don't know whether or not it evades the antibodies that protect you against the virus", Dr Fauci told CNN. The WHO has warned against countries hastily imposing travel restrictions, saying they should look to a "risk-based and scientific approach". However, in addition to the UK, and the US and the EU, a host of other countries have also announced restrictions: Australia announced on Saturday that flights from South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, the Seychelles, Malawi, and Mozambique would be suspended for 14 days. Non-Aus-

tralian who have been in those countries in the past two weeks are now banned from entering Australia. Japan has announced that from Saturday, travellers from much of southern Africa will need to quarantine for 10 days and take a total of four tests during that time. India has ordered more rigorous screening and testing for travellers arriving from South Africa, Botswana and Hong Kong.

Iran will ban travellers from six southern African countries, including South Africa. Iranians arriving from the region will be admitted after testing negative twice, state TV says. Brazil also said it was restricting travel to the region from six countries in Africa. South Africa's Health Minister Joe Phaahla told reporters that the flight bans were "unjustified". "The reaction of some of the countries, in terms of imposing travel bans, and such measures, are completely against the norms and standards as guided by the World Health Organization," he said. Echoing his words, Angelique Coetzee, chairperson of the South African Medical Association, told the BBC that the travel restrictions on her country were premature. "For now, it is a storm in a tea cup," she said. Only about 24% of South Africa's population is fully vaccinated, which could spur a rapid spread of cases there, Dr Mike Tildesley, a member of the Scientific

Pandemic Influenza Modelling group (Spi-M), told the BBC on Friday. Stock markets across the world also fell sharply on Friday, reflecting the fears of investors over the potential economic impact. The FTSE 100 index of leading UK shares closed 3.7% down, while main markets in Germany, France and the US also sank. A "variant of concern" is the World Health Organization's top category of worrying Covid variants. The decision adds weight to the mounting scientific worry about the potential of this new variant, but it doesn't change any of the facts. The variant has an astounding collection of mutations which are thought to increase its ability to spread and bypass some, but not all, of the protection from vaccines. However, we still don't have the clear real-world data. We don't know for sure that it spreads faster, makes vaccines or drugs less effective or whether it leads to more severe disease. The WHO have also given it a name and ended days of speculation that we would end up in the slightly ridiculous position of calling the new variant the "Nu variant". There have even been arguments about the correct pronunciation of the Greek letter Nu (it's technically a "Nee"). Instead, you can guarantee we'll be talking a lot about Omicron in the weeks to come.

Coronavirus variants:

What are they and how do they happen?

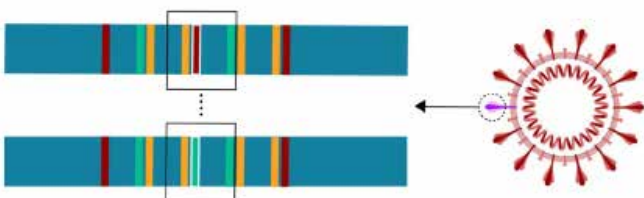
1 High numbers of cases increase risk of mutations

The more a virus spreads, the more chance it has to mutate. Thousands of small changes have been seen in coronavirus so far - most with little impact.



2 Some mutations lead to new variants

Every so often, a virus changes in a way that helps it survive. Scientists are particularly concerned about changes to the spike protein - the part that helps it enter human cells.





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Food

Crispy Fish & Chips

Crispy Fish & Chips

Total Time: 30 mins

Serves: 4 Servings

Ingredients

1. 4 cups frozen steak fries
2. 4 salmon fillets (6 ounces each)
3. 1 to 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish
4. 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
5. 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
6. 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

7. 1/4 teaspoon salt
8. 1/2 cup panko bread crumbs
9. Cooking spray

How to-

1. Preheat oven to 450°. Arrange steak fries in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake on lowest oven rack 18-20 minutes or until light golden brown.
2. Meanwhile, place salmon on a foil-lined baking sheet coated with cooking spray.

In a small bowl, mix horseradish, cheese, Worcestershire sauce, mustard and salt; stir in panko. Press mixture onto fillets. Spritz tops with cooking spray.

3. Bake salmon on middle oven rack 8-10 minutes or until fish just begins to flake easily with a fork. Serve with fries.



Almond Tea Bread

Almond Tea Bread

Total Time: 20 mins

Serves: 2 Servings

Ingredients

1. 4 cups frozen steak fries
2. 4 salmon fillets (6 ounces each)
3. 1 to 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish
4. 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
5. 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
6. 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
7. 1/4 teaspoon salt
8. 1/2 cup panko bread crumbs
9. Cooking spray

How to-

1. Preheat oven to 450°. Ar-

range steak fries in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake on lowest oven rack 18-20 minutes or until light golden brown.

2. Meanwhile, place salmon on a foil-lined baking sheet coated with cooking spray. In a small bowl, mix horseradish, cheese, Worcestershire sauce, mustard and salt; stir in panko. Press mixture onto fillets. Spritz tops with cooking spray.
3. Bake salmon on middle oven rack 8-10 minutes or until fish just begins to flake easily with a fork. Serve with fries.



Colcannon Potatoes



Colcannon Potatoes

Prep Time: 25 mins

Cook Time: 35 mins

Serves: 12 Servings

Ingredients

1. 1 medium head cabbage (about 2 pounds), shredded
2. 4 pounds medium potatoes (about 8), peeled and quartered
3. 2 cups whole milk
4. 1 cup chopped green onions
5. 1-1/2 teaspoons salt
6. 1/2 teaspoon pepper
7. 1/4 cup butter, melted
8. Minced fresh parsley
9. Crumbled cooked bacon

How to-

1. Place cabbage and 2 cups water in a large saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, un-

til cabbage is tender, about 10 minutes. Drain, reserving cooking liquid; keep cabbage warm in separate dish.

2. In same pan, combine potatoes and reserved cooking liquid. Add additional water to cover potatoes; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cook, uncovered, until potatoes are tender, 15-20 minutes. Meanwhile, place milk, green onions, salt and pepper in a small saucepan; bring just to a boil and remove from heat.
3. Drain potatoes; place in a large bowl and mash. Add milk mixture; beat just until blended. Stir in cabbage. To serve, drizzle with butter; top with parsley and bacon.

Food

Best Lasagna

Best Lasagna**Prep Time: 1 hr****Cook Time: 50 mins****Serves: 12 Servings****Ingredients**

1. 9 lasagna noodles
2. 1-1/4 pounds bulk Italian sausage
3. 3/4 pound ground beef
4. 1 medium onion, diced
5. 3 garlic cloves, minced
6. 2 cans (one 28 ounces, one 15 ounces) crushed tomatoes
7. 2 cans (6 ounces each) tomato paste
8. 2/3 cup water
9. 2 to 3 tablespoons sugar
10. 3 tablespoons plus 1/4 cup minced fresh parsley, divided
11. 2 teaspoons dried basil
12. 3/4 teaspoon fennel seed
13. 3/4 teaspoon salt, divided

14. 1/4 teaspoon coarsely ground pepper
15. 1 large egg, lightly beaten
16. 1 carton (15 ounces) ricotta cheese
17. 4 cups shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
18. 3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

How to-

1. Cook noodles according to package directions; drain. Meanwhile, in a Dutch oven, cook sausage, beef and onion over medium heat 8-10 minutes or until meat is no longer pink, breaking up meat into crumbles. Add garlic; cook 1 minute. Drain.
2. Stir in tomatoes, tomato paste, water, sugar, 3 tablespoons parsley, basil, fennel, 1/2 teaspoon salt

and pepper; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

3. In a small bowl, mix egg, ricotta cheese and remaining parsley and salt.
4. Preheat oven to 375°. Spread 2 cups meat sauce into an ungreased 13x9-in. baking dish. Layer with 3 noodles and a third of the ricotta mixture. Sprinkle with 1 cup mozzarella cheese and 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese. Repeat layers twice. Top with remaining meat sauce and cheeses (dish will be full).
5. Bake, covered, 25 minutes. Bake, uncovered, 25 minutes longer or until bubbly. Let stand 15 minutes before serving.



Garlic Beef Enchiladas

Garlic Beef Enchiladas**Prep Time: 30 mins****Cook Time: 40 mins****Serves: 5 Servings****Ingredients**

1. 1 pound ground beef
2. 1 medium onion, chopped
3. 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
4. 1 tablespoon chili powder
5. 1 teaspoon salt
6. 1 teaspoon garlic powder
7. 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
8. 1/4 teaspoon rubbed sage
9. 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) stewed tomatoes, cut up
10. SAUCE:
11. 1/3 cup butter
12. 4 to 6 garlic cloves, minced
13. 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
14. 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) beef broth
15. 1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce
16. 1 to 2 tablespoons chili

- powder
17. 1 to 2 teaspoons ground cumin
18. 1 to 2 teaspoons rubbed sage
19. 1/2 teaspoon salt
20. 10 flour tortillas (6 inches), warmed
21. 2 cups shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese, divided
22. Optional toppings: Halved grape tomatoes, minced fresh cilantro, sliced jalapeno peppers, chopped or sliced red onion and cubed avocado

How to-

1. Preheat oven to 350°. In a large skillet, cook beef and onion over medium heat until beef is no longer pink, 6-8 minutes, breaking meat into crumbles; drain. Stir in flour and seasonings. Add

tomatoes; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, 15 minutes.

2. In a saucepan, heat butter over medium-high heat. Add garlic; cook and stir 1 minute or until tender. Stir in flour until blended; gradually whisk in broth. Bring to a boil; cook and stir until thickened, about 2 minutes. Stir in tomato sauce and seasonings; heat through.
3. Pour 1-1/2 cups sauce into an ungreased 13x9-in. baking dish. Place about 1/4 cup beef mixture off center on each tortilla; top with 1-2 tablespoons cheese. Roll up and place over sauce, seam side down. Top with remaining sauce.
4. Bake, covered, until heated through, 30-35 minutes.



Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake, uncovered, until cheese is melted, 10-

15 minutes longer. Serve with toppings as desired.

Skillet Mac & Cheese

Skillet Mac & Cheese**Prep Time: 25 mins****Total Time: 25 mins****Serves: 4 Servings****Ingredients**

1. 2 cups uncooked pasta (about 8 ounces), such as elbow macaroni, cavatappi or shells
2. 2 tablespoons butter
3. 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
4. 1-1/2 cups half-and-half

cream

5. 3/4 pound process cheese (Velveeta), cubed
6. Optional toppings: Fresh arugula, halved cherry tomatoes and coarsely ground pepper

How to-

1. Cook pasta according to package directions; drain.
2. Meanwhile, in a large cast-iron or other heavy skillet, melt butter over medium

heat. Stir in flour until smooth; gradually whisk in cream. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Cook and stir until thickened, about 2 minutes. Reduce heat; stir in cheese until melted.

3. Add macaroni; cook and stir until heated through. Top as desired.





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Horoscope December 2021



Aries - March 21 - April 20

You need to mingle with people who can spark enthusiasm and confidence in you. Your need to obtain additional details will lead you into strange topics of conversation. You have a tendency to think that no one else will do things properly. You can get ahead if you are willing to take a partner.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Wednesday.

Taurus Information

- April 21 - May 20

Your lack of responsibility and attention has been a key issue in your relationship. Don't be afraid of opposition; your suggestions are valid. A romantic infatuation from your past may surface if you frequent places that you both used to go. You'll have problems with authority figures if you don't play by the rules.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Sunday.

Gemini Information

- May 21 - June 21

Opportunities to travel will be favorable in terms of moneymaking connections. You will be misinterpreted if you get involved in other people's problems. Don't let coworkers interfere with your objectives. Social evenings at your place will be highly successful.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Thursday.

Gemini Information

- May 21 - June 21

Be sure to take advantage of the opportunities that exist. Social gatherings will be conducive to meeting new potential mates. Do not get upset about situations you cannot change. You can make new friends and experience new things if you do a bit of traveling.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Sunday.

Leo Information

- July 23 - August 22

Your creative imagination will help you in coming up with unique ideas. Be sure to spend time helping children with projects that are too difficult for them to accomplish alone. Try to communicate if you wish to help. You may come down with minor infections if you have allowed yourself to get rundown.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Tuesday.

Virgo Information

- August 23 - September 22

Avoid letting family get involved in your personal life. Don't overspend or give too freely to others. A little rest will do wonders. Be prepared to lose friends or alienate loved ones due to your stubborn nature lately.



Libra Information

- September 23 - October 22

Talk to people who can give you important knowledge. Your personal situation is fluctuating. You must get out and mingle. Don't let others make you feel guilty or insecure.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Sunday.

Scorpio Information

- October 23 - November 21

Don't blow situations out of proportion. Try to take some time to listen to their complaints, and in turn, do something to appease them. You will be able to make financial gains. Don't let your personal problems interfere with your professional responsibilities.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Thursday.

Sagittarius Information

- November 22 - December 20

Your ability to help others will win you points. Try not to donate to organizations if you can hardly afford to take care of yourself. Someone you live with may cause drastic alterations in your usual routine. Be very careful while in transit or while traveling in foreign countries.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Tuesday.

Capricorn Information

- December 21 - January 19

You will be able to get your own way if you use your intellectual charm and know how. Listen to the complaints of others. Don't delay; go to your physician or dentist and get to the bottom of the discomfort. You can make new friends who could turn into intimate connections if you join clubs or take creative courses.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Saturday.

Aquarius Information

- January 20 - February 18

You may have a problem at work with a female coworker. Be careful when using machinery or electrical equipment. Opportunities may come up at prestigious affairs. You can anger others quickly this month. Avoid overspending on items for your home.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Sunday.

Pisces Information

- February 19 - March 20

You will be drawn to individuals who can provide you with both intellectual conversation and physical passion. You may find yourself in an opportune position if you are willing to take a bit of a risk. You can make drastic changes in your professional direction this month. Try not to overspend on friends or family.

Your luckiest events this month will occur on a Monday.



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Bollywood

As Salman Khan Returns to Big Screen, Antim Expected to Break Box Office Records

Actor Salman Khan and Aayush Sharma-starrer film *Antim: The Final Truth* hit the theatres on Friday. With this movie, Salman returns to the big screen after two years. *Dabangg 3* was the last film, starring Salman, which premiered in theatres in December 2019. Salman's 'Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai' was released on the OTT platform in May 2021. As Salman Khan makes a comeback on the big screen with 'Antim', trade analysts say the film may go on to break some records at the box office. His last theatrical release 'Dabangg 3' earned around Rs 146 crores at the box office. Now, cinemas have been reopened after a long gap and Salman's fans were waiting to see him in action on big screens. Hence, it is expected that *Antim* will make a big collection at the

box office. *Antim* marks the first collaboration of Salman with his brother-in-law Aayush Sharma. The story of *Antim* revolves around an honest police officer Rajveer Singh (Salman Khan) and a farmer's son Rahuliya's (Aayush Sharma) conflict. Fans are going to see a completely different look of Salman in this film. He will be seen in a Sardar's getup for the first time in the entire film. Movies featuring Salman Khan in the role of a cop have seen success at the box office. 'Wanted' and 'Dabangg' series have proven that in the past. Therefore, it is expected that Salman's film 'Antim' is also going to get a lot of love from the audience. Apart from Salman and Aayush, *Antim* also stars Mahesh V. Manjrekar, Mahima Makwana and Pragya Jaiswal. The movie is a remake



of the 2018 Marathi film *Mulshi Pattern*. Mahesh Manjrekar has

directed *Antim* while it has been produced by Salman Khan un-

der the banner of Salman Khan Films.

Karan Johar, Ekta Kapoor, and more receive Padma Shri awards

Film producers Karan Johar, Ekta Kapoor, actor-filmmaker Kangana Ranaut, veteran actor Sarita Joshi, playback singer Suresh Wadkar and music composer Adnan Sami were among 61 Padma Shri awardees for the year 2020 who received the country's fourth highest civilian honour on Monday at a ceremony held in the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. President Ram Nath Kovind presented Padma awards to 73 individuals, some posthumously. Of these, four were Padma Vibhushan, eight Padma Bhushan and 61 Padma Shri awards for the year 2020, according to a statement issued by the President's office. Johar, director and producer of popular films like "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" and "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham", said it was "surreal" to receive the Padma Shri Award. "I feel extremely fortunate to receive it from the hands of our honourable President Shri Ram Nath Kovind," he wrote on Instagram adding this is a monumental day "for me, my mother, my kids and my company, and will forever be etched in my memory".

"Thank you so much for all

your wishes and the abundance of love!" Johar added. Ekta was felicitated for her contribution in the field of television, films and digital content. Her producing credits include popular soap operas like "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi", "Bade Acche Lagte Hain", films "Once Upon a Time in Mumbai", "The Dirty Picture", "Veere Di Wedding", and web series "Bose: Dead/Alive" and "Broken But Beautiful", among several others. The producer, daughter of actors Jeetendra and Shobha Kapoor, said it is an "absolute honour" to receive the fourth highest civilian award for her contribution in the field of performing arts. "It is a surreal moment and a matter of great pride. I want to dedicate this badge of honour to my two pillars of strength - my mom and dad. They believed in me with their whole heart and it is because of them, I am who I am," Ekta said in a statement. She said she was overwhelmed with the love and accolades coming her way. "I want to thank my family, friends, my team at Balaji Telefilms and most importantly - the audience, for believing in me and supporting me. I hope

to always push the envelope, challenge norms, give talents a platform that they truly deserve, instill pride and give back to the country that has fuelled my ambition and dreams," the filmmaker added. Ranaut, who was presented with the Padma Shri two weeks after she picked up her fourth National Film Award, expressed her gratitude for receiving the honour "for being a model citizen" of India. "As an artist, I have received many awards, love and acknowledgement but today I have received an award for being a model citizen from this country, this government. I'm grateful," she said in a video posted on her official Instagram page. "When I started working at a young age, I didn't achieve success until 8-10 years into my career. I didn't enjoy my success. I turned down offers to endorse fairness products, boycotted item numbers, rejected working in big hero films and with big production houses," Ranaut, known for films like "Queen", "Tanu Weds Manu" franchise and this year's "Thalaivi", added. The actor-producer, who is known for her provocative statements,

said receiving "this honour will shut the mouths of many people" who often ask her why she concerns herself with matters of national importance. "I made more enemies than money. When I became more aware about national matters, I raised my voice against any power that threatens the country..." she said, adding she had lost count of how many legal cases she is currently embroiled in. Wadkar, known for lending his voice to melodious songs like "Ae Zindagi Gale Laga Le", "Tumse Milke" and "Megha Re", said he is happy to receive the honour. "It's a great honour. Even though it came a bit late, I believe, I'm happy that my country has recognised my contribution. It's (Padma Shri) is one of the biggest honours for an artiste and has motivated me to do even better in the field of music," Wadkar said. Sami was also awarded the honour in the field of art. The Pakistan-origin musician, who is also a concert pianist, singer and actor, became an Indian citizen in 2016. The music composer said he is grateful to the Government of India for bestowing him with the Padma Shri Award, the "greatest

honour". "I am forever indebted to my beautiful people of India who've loved me unconditionally & been an integral part of my journey which has brought me till here! Luv you all," the composer wrote on Twitter. Joshi, who was presented the Padma Shri in the field of art, is an award-winning stage, television and film actress known for her work in serials like "Ba Bahoo Aur Baby", "Meri Aashiqui Tumse Hi" and "Hasratein".

She has performed in about 15,000 shows in Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi and Marwari over a span of six decades. The Padma awards are given in three categories — Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri — and announced annually on the eve of Republic Day. The Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service, Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of high order and Padma Shri for distinguished service in any field. Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah were among the dignitaries present on the occasion.

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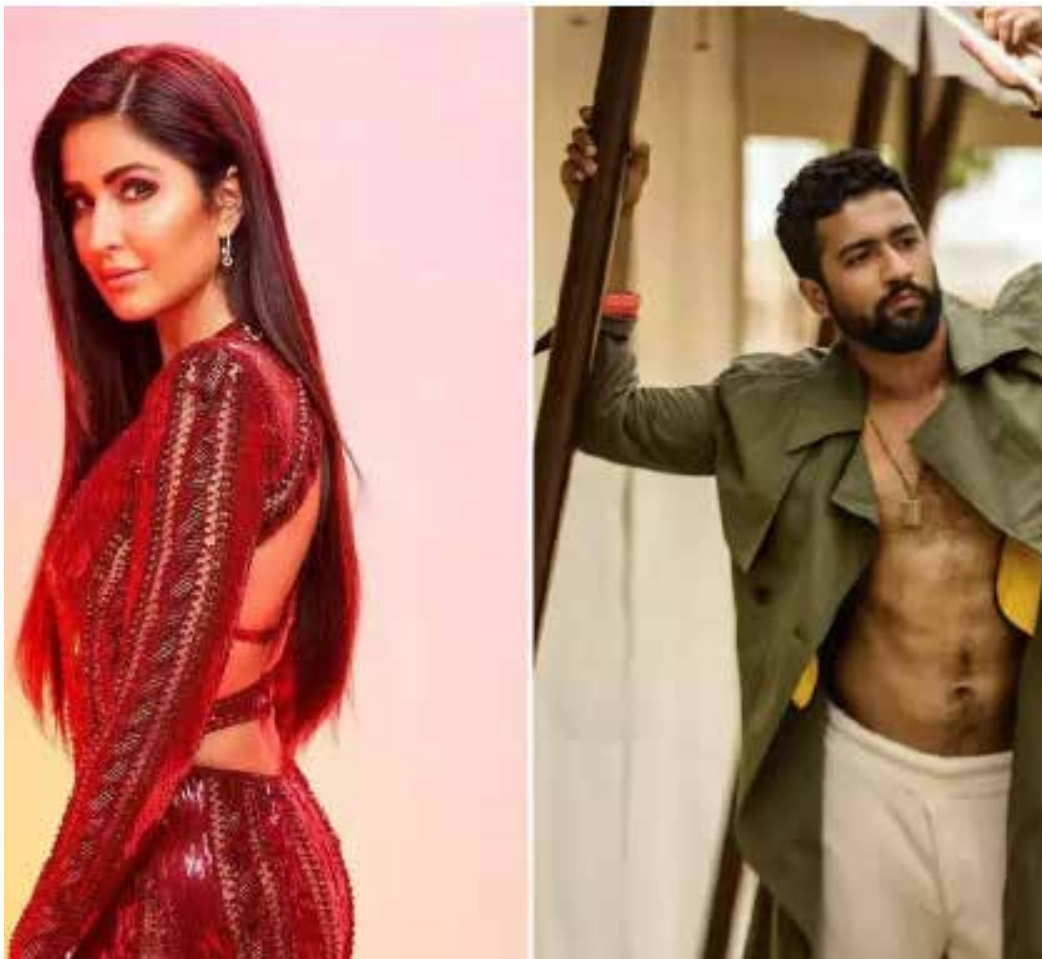


Bollywood

Vicky Kaushal's sister bluffed, 45 hotels booked in Ranthambore for wedding with Katrina Kaif on December 7,8,9 - Exclusive!

It's happening, it's happening, it's happening. Wonder why Vicky Kaushal's cousin sister's statement is making news on the Internet when it isn't true? The truth remains that Vicky and Katrina are becoming man and wife in a 3-day lavish affair in Ranthambore. Don't forget that ETimes was the first to tell you about the wedding and also the first to reveal the venue. We were bang on! The venue is indeed Six Senses. In fact, call up any hotel in Ranthambore and try to fix up a hall for even 20 people and you are likely to be turned away from each one of them. "Yahan bahut saare stars aane wale hain from December 7 onward. Salman ka bhi suna tha ki woh December 9 ko aayenge lekin phir suna ki woh nahi aa rahe. Chalo ab dekhte hain kaun aayega aur kaun nahi (Lot of stars expected, Salman too was expected to attend sometime around December 9 but now we hear he is unlikely to make it)," says our source from Ranthambore. And yes, it is going to be a lavish affair unlike the news that

had circulated earlier. ETimes has now found out that about 45 hotels have been booked. "Here the hotels are not too big. Ranthambore has small hotels. So it's not a surprise that more than 40 hotels have been booked for a wedding that will see many Bollywood celebrities coming," adds the source. For those who've come in late, Vicky's cousin sister's denial-mode statement was: Reports about preparations for the wedding dates are all rumours being spread in the media. The marriage is not taking place. If such a thing happens, they will announce it. In Bollywood, such rumours are often circulated and later it turns out that it was something else. They are just temporary rumours. I had a talk with my brother recently. There is nothing like that. I don't want to comment on this issue anymore, but the marriage is not taking place at the moment. And again for those who've come in late, it was ETimes that broke the story of Katrina supervising the decor being done in Vicky's new flat in Mumbai's Juhu.



Shoojit Sircar: I am very scared of expectations, please don't expect anything from me

By your admission, you've lived with the story of Sardar Udham for over two decades. You spent about five years alone writing its script with Shubhendu and Ritesh. What has life been like post the movie?

You sometimes feel you have nothing left to do anymore. Kabhi kabhi hota hai aisa. The film was mounted on a big canvas, though we tried to not make it too big. Now suddenly after the movie is over, I feel like I don't know what to do. There is an emptiness that creeps in. Ronnie and I have ideas and we keep talking about them, and discussing them but it's hard to get rid of that khaalipan, that vacuum created after Sardar Udham went out of our system. Both Ronnie and I had never thought it would go through the way it did. It's like there was a little storm which has now blown over, and now we don't know what to do.

How do you deal with emp-

teness? You have to keep nurturing yourself. This is a very crucial period and often, people end up making wrong decisions during this phase. You want to quickly start something and put it out there. But the better way out is to remain calm and do things with proper thought and planning. Creatively, you have to keep yourself engaged and active - you have to keep the fire burning. Sometimes, you can do it through cinema and sometimes, you just do things like gardening, playing football or reading something or watching something. Is that why you often escape to villages in North Bengal and spend time cooking seasonal vegetables and gardening? Yes, that's right! I regularly go to North Bengal where I was born. I grew up there and I spent my childhood in those places that I visit even now. It's very peaceful. I'm going to stay in Goa for some time now and do some reading here. I also plan

to jam with my researchers and see what we can arrive at. I am not in a hurry to make a new film. Sardar Udham and Gulabo Sitabo, were both appreciated and criticised in equal measures. Have you been able to go over the points of criticism that have been raised on the films? Look, I have realised that criticism is something that you have to take. You can't escape it and it's a part and parcel of the work we do. You have to be ready for it and for observations that people make. Also, as a creative person, you cannot possibly cater to everyone and to everything that is asked of you. As Ronnie said during our masterclass session, we did not and we have not compromised on Sardar Udham in any manner. Yes, we may have made mistakes. We will go through the content and whatever mistakes we can identify, we will make a note of it and make up for it in our next films. The idea is to not repeat

those mistakes again. It's like this. I am absolutely not worried about criticism. It can affect you depending on the way you take it. Sometimes, criticism is very healthy and helpful. You have to know which part of criticism is important for you. Sometimes, you have to just let criticism pass and sometimes, you have to hold on to the things people tell you. I believe in taking just those points that are beneficial, learn from those and take it forward. During the session, we had asked you about the matter on Sardar Udham that you have had to keep out of the film. Were you serious when you said that you would probably include those points in a series if you make one?

Frankly, I don't know what I will do with the material that I am left with from the film. There is a lot of research that I have. I have heard that Ram Madhvani is making a film on Jallianwala Bagh. I might give it to him.

I would love to offer him all my research. It's a creative and competitive line but I have told everyone that I am ready for any discussion on this subject. I can tell you books, I have books that have been marked out, taped and set aside. I can help anyone who needs help on research on this subject. Using flashbacks or going back and forth in time in a screenplay is commonplace but the way you did it in Sardar Udham was experimental in many ways, which seems to have increased expectations from you. Does that scare you? I am very scared of expectations, please don't expect anything from me. The next movie that I make may not cater to everyone. So far, I have tried to make films that I am happy about. The subjects Ronnie and I are discussing are about films that are completely out of the box. So, don't expect anything from me. And frankly, expectations scare me a lot!

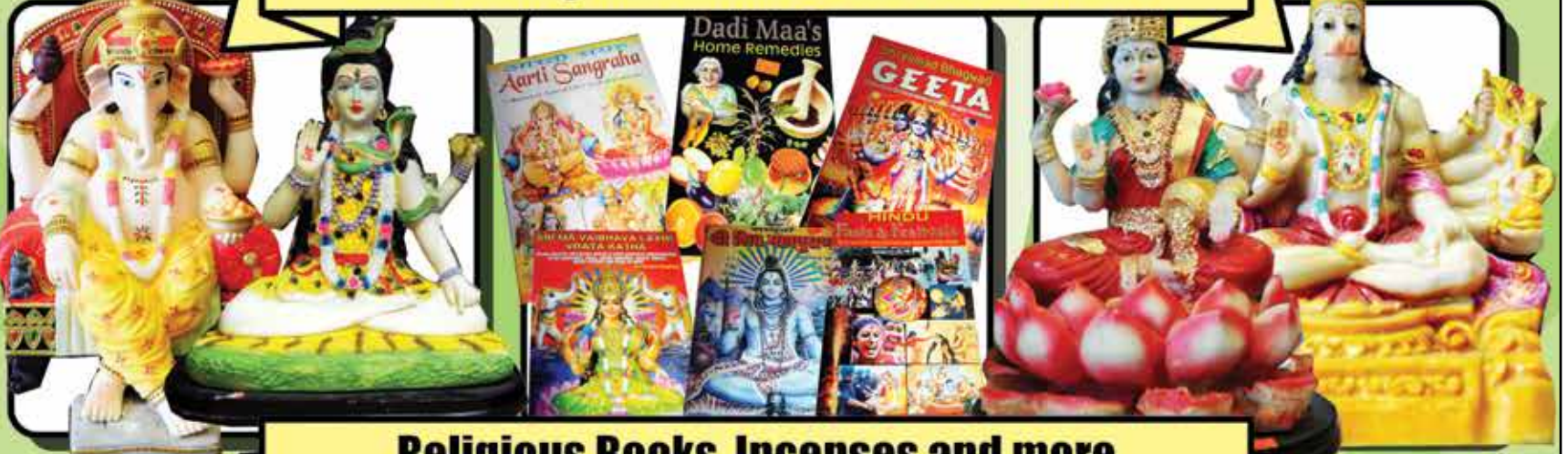
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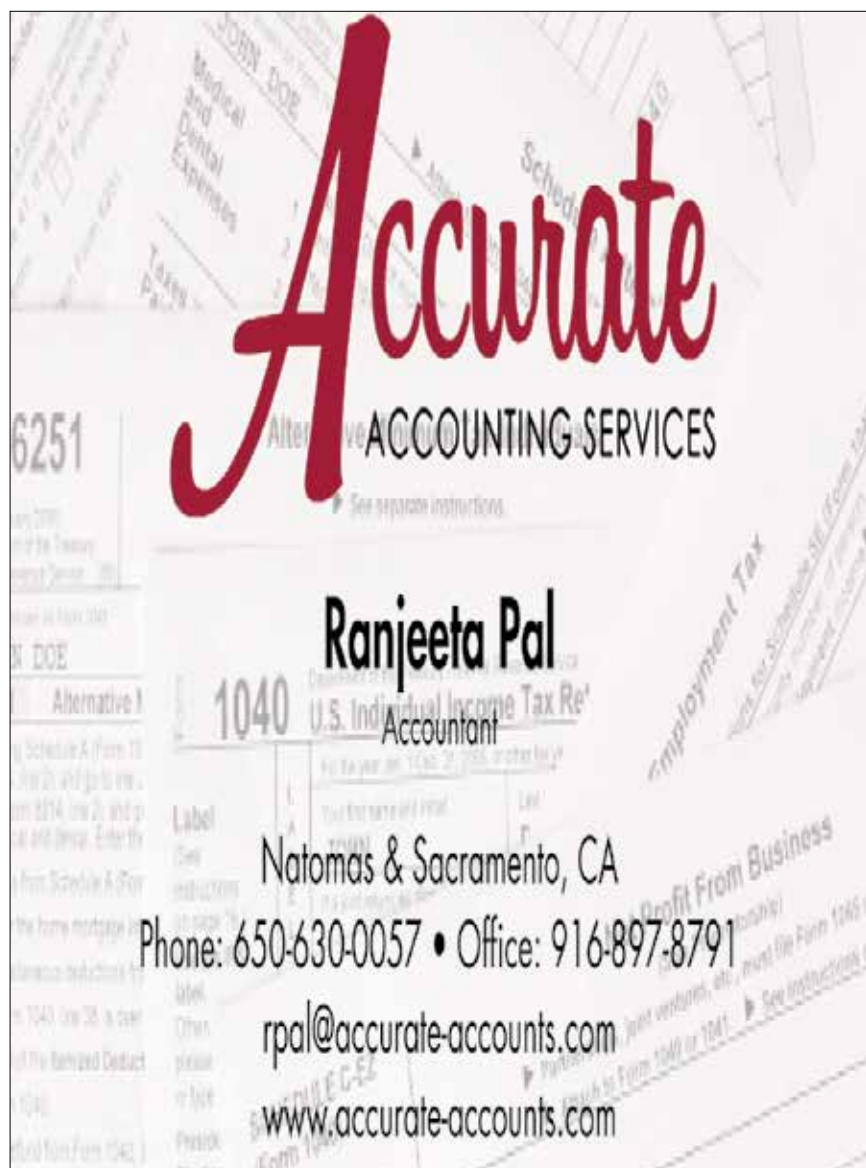
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World News

Magdalena Andersson: Sweden's first female PM returns after resignation

Sweden's first female prime minister has been reappointed to the top job after political turmoil forced her to resign within hours of taking the post last week. MPs backed Social Democratic Party leader Magdalena Andersson by a narrow margin in a new vote on Monday. She will attempt to lead a one-party government until an election in September next year. She stood down as PM last Wednesday after her coalition collapsed. Just hours earlier, Ms Andersson had been elected as Sweden's first female prime minister by a single vote in parliament. But the 54-year-old economist's plan for forming a new coalition government with the Green Party was thrown into disarray when her budget proposal failed to pass. Instead, parliament voted for a budget drawn up by a group of opposition parties, including the far-right Sweden Democrats. The Green Party said it would not accept a budget drafted by the far-right and walked away from the government, leading to its demise. By convention, the prime minister in Sweden is expected to resign if a coalition

party leaves government. In Monday's vote in Sweden's parliament, the Riksdag, 101 of its 349 members voted yes, 75 abstained and 173 voted no. To be appointed prime minister under Sweden's political system, a candidate only needs to avoid a majority voting against them. At a news conference after the vote, Ms Andersson said she was ready to "take Sweden forward" with a programme focused on welfare, climate change and crime. But without the support of other parties, Ms Andersson will struggle to pass legislation in parliament, where the centre-left Social Democrats hold 100 of 349 seats.

Political soap opera far from over After a week of drama, Magdalena Andersson's prime ministerial career is back on track, but Sweden's political soap opera is far from over. Ms Andersson still has to implement a budget put together by some of her right-wing rivals. Plus, she's got to govern a fragile minority without the formal support of the Greens, who've been a crucial coalition partner since 2014. All this has



highlighted the complexities of having a deeply divided eight-party parliament. Some political commentators here are worried that Ms Andersson's chaotic rise to power may have dented trust in the entire political system. Once formed, Ms Andersson's new government will remain in place until general elections, which are set to take place in

September next year. Until then, she's got just over nine months to prove herself to the public. A former junior swimming champion from the university city of Uppsala, Ms Andersson began her political career in 1996 as political adviser to then-Prime Minister Goran Persson. She has spent the past seven years as finance minister before becoming

leader of the Social Democrats at the start of November. She replaced Stefan Lofven, who resigned as prime minister after seven years in power. Until Ms Andersson took over, Mr Lofven had remained prime minister of a caretaker government after being ousted in an unprecedented vote of no confidence in June.

New Covid variant: South Africa's pride and punishment

South Africans have responded sharply to the news that the UK, and a growing list of other countries, have reacted to the emergence of a new Covid variant with red-listings and travel bans. While there is genuine pride here in the country's scientific expertise, and the speed with which South Africa has been able to identify and share information about new variants, there is also a strong sense that the nation is being unfairly punished for its successes. "The world should provide support to South Africa and Africa and not discriminate or isolate it," said Prof Tulio de Oliveira, the Durban-based scientist leading efforts to understand the new variant. In a series of tweets, he pointed out that South Africa has been "very transparent with scientific information. We did this to protect our country and the world in spite of potentially suffering massive discrimination." South Africa has a sophisticated monitoring infrastructure that allows it to do the sequencing work effectively.

'UK should reconsider' Prof de Oliveira urged "billionaires and financial institutions" to help the country cope with the economic damage caused by new travel restrictions. South Africa's Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor was also quick to condemn the UK's travel ban, describing it as "rushed" and damaging to tourism and business, and urging the UK government "to reconsider this decision". News of the flight bans has caused inevitable frustration among many South Africans who had hoped to see visiting friends and family over the southern hemisphere summer holidays in December. South Africa was one of the last countries to have previously been removed from the red list last month. "It's absolutely ridiculous that they've imposed it again so quickly without investigating this new variant," said one woman waiting for arrivals from London at Cape Town's international airport this morning. "My sister just got on the flight [from London] but I think she'll be staying here for a long

time. We were just getting on our feet again with tourism, and this is going to just kill it." "The new ban is a knee-jerk reaction of the UK government that puts airlines, hotels, travel businesses and travellers in a very difficult situation," said Otto de Vries, CEO of South Africa's travel agents' association, Asata. One industry analysis estimated that South Africa lost 26 million rand (\$1.6m; £1.2m) for every day it spent on the UK's red list. "The UK being our largest inbound international market, last night's news by the British government has caused widespread disbelief and disappointment amongst our hospitality industry as we enter our peak festive season period," said Rosemary Anderson, national chairperson of the Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa. Overall, tourism employs 2.8 million people and in 2018 it earned the country about \$8bn (£6bn). The variant was first sequenced in neighbouring Botswana, and then in South Africa's capital, Pretoria. That was where a group of stu-

dents, exactly how many is not known, took PCR tests which all contained an anomaly that prompted experts to send their samples to Prof de Oliveira's Durban laboratory for genome sequencing. "His team then found all these mutations. So we've only know about it for a few days, and because it's a new variant we have no idea how it will actually behave," said Prof Salim Karim, former chair of the South African government's Covid advisory committee. "All we can do is extrapolate some of the likely behaviour based on previous similar mutations. But we do know that it spreads fast - we've seen how rapidly it spread in Pretoria. It sky-rocketed." From a relatively low base, the numbers of confirmed cases in South Africa have shot up this week - from less than 700 on Sunday to almost 2,500 on Thursday. It is believed the increase is largely down to the new variant. South Africa's vaccination programme has slowed in recent months - not because of a lack of supplies, but due to public indifference.

An estimated 42% of the population has had at least one jab. But roughly two-thirds of those aged over 60 have been vaccinated. Experts are hopeful that the variant may help encourage more people to get jabbed. The government has urged people to come forward, saying: "Let us crush the power of the new variant by vaccinating to limit the number of mutations." "It's going to be a shock to the system. I think it can have a positive effect [on vaccination rates]," said Stavros Nicolaou, senior executive at Aspen Pharmacare Group. "We know this variant is more contagious. My sense is that the current vaccines are likely to reduce morbidity. They might not be as effective in terms of preventing people getting infected. All the more reason, if you've got a more contagious variant, that you should go out and get vaccinated." The bigger concern is the potential impact of the variant if it spreads to other parts of the continent where, on average, roughly 3% of the population has been vaccinated.

FIJIAN'S IN CONCORD CALIFORNIA CELEBRATED FIJI DAY WITH A ONE DAY GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP



A packed 40 player field to the first FIJI DAY Golf celebrations took place in pure Fijian style at the Diablo Creek Golf Course Concord CA on October 16th, 2021. Players from all around the Bay area converged at the historic course and competed for the Coveted Players Championship Cup.

The Tournament was organized by Bishwa Nand, Rohitesh Lal and Roy Chetty who were thrilled to welcome players and guests at the presentation ceremonies, with Chief Guest Jay Singh, San Francisco based Honorary Consul General for the Govt. of Fiji.

In welcoming players and guests, Master of Ceremonies Bishwa Nand thanked members of AFGC, Aloha, Sacramento and other affiliate clubs for participating.

The inaugural tournament was won by Bay area resident Jimmy Chaudhary who outclassed several new and seasoned players with an impressive Net 69 score card.

In his remarks Jay Singh reminded the gathering that we all come from a small island nation, distant but unique in many ways and that events like the Fiji Day Golf tournament was necessary to keep former

residents connected with each other and that the Fijian community remain strong and united. He also provided a brief overview of events in Fiji and the long awaited news about Fiji reopening its doors for tourism. To a rousing applause, Mr. Singh announced the resumption of FIJI AIRWAYS flights from San Francisco. Fijians have been trapped since the onslaught of the global pandemic, but now that the Govt. as lifted the ban, travel will allow Fijians to visit their loved ones back home.

From a FIJI DAY celebrations stand point Consul Singh said he was looking forward to helping commemorate the annual event by supporting the committee and the players in the coming years. He said he was confident next year's celebrations will be bigger and include more members of the Community.

In his remarks, Roy Chetty complimented Consul Singh for his long service to the country and the residents of the Bay area and his commitment to keeping Fijian interests at the forefront. Mr. Singh's role as a diplomat continues to keep the community informed of initiatives of the Fijian Govt. and working with his US counter-

parts are also admirable, Chetty said.

Tournament Directors Bishwa Nand and Rohitesh Lal were presented with a FIJI souvenir penant by Chief Guest Singh for their hard work and dedication in helping host the event. Numerous trophies and prizes were on display at the end of the tournament, which was also attended and covered by US Fiji Times Publisher Rocky Ali and his journalists.

The presentation began with the playing of the National Anthem of Fiji, a solemn moment as all in the hall joined to sing the Banner Blue.

In closing Tournament Director Rohitesh Lal thanked the players for competing in a spirit of good sportsmanship, completing the day at a good pace and acknowledged the following sponsors who donated generously with gifts and prizes, namely Shim Kanhai, Madhu Krishna, Rishi Prasad, Sam Deo and Edwin Ram. Roy Chetty donated the Championship trophy, a crystal cup while Rohitesh Lal donated the Runner Up and Bishwa Nand donated the Lowest Net trophies.



RONIL SINGH'S 3rd MEMORIAL SOCCER TOURNAMENT

Ronil Singh memorial Cup tournament was held in Stockton California where Fijian's & Indian communities got together to pay tribute to our fallen Officer who was shot on the night of Boxing day of 2018 in Newman City which is about 2 hours from San Francisco, California. Newman city employees about 12 Police Officer and is located in a farming Area. Ronil Singh was greatly missed by his Parents, Wife, Son, Brother & his inlaws during his memorial tournament. We lost a great hero and he will never be forgotten.



RONIL SINGH MEMORIAL CUP CHAMPIONSHIP



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