



THE US FIJI TIMES

World's Largest Fiji Newspaper Out Of Republic of Fiji

February 2025 Monthly Publication - Subscription Available Pages 60 Volume: 244

Usha Vance inauguration outfit: What to know about second lady



Second lady Usha Vance, the wife of Vice President JD Vance, was present across the inauguration day festivities in Washington.

Many on the internet were wondering about her pink coat and dress. It turns out the outfit is from Oscar de la Renta. The outfit was a "custom peony cashmere coat with scarf wrap and complementing tea-length dress," the clothing brand posted on social media.

"An ongoing celebration of American history and tradition," said the company.

First daughter Ivanka Trump also wore an Oscar de la Renta dress for a pre-inaugural ball.



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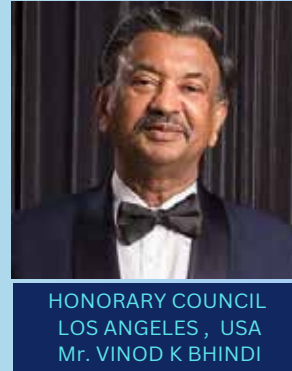
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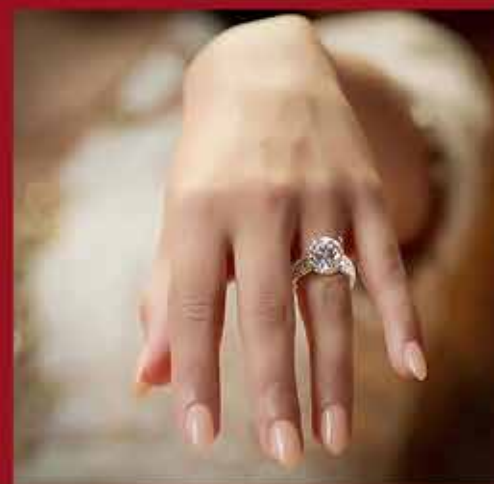
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THE US FIJI TIMES PROUD OF ITS SERVICE

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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From Neelam Supermarket of San Bruno California Happy Raksha Bandhan To All.

Raksha Bandhan is an auspicious festival that celebrates the beautiful bond of brothers and sisters. It is a pledge taken by the brothers to protect and safeguard their sisters in all stages of life. Their precious relationship of love, care, affection, admiration, and adoration is symbolized by a decorative thread called 'rakhi'. A rakhi is tied by the sisters on her brother's wrist to ask for his lifelong love and support which he happily accepts and shower his sister with amazing Rakhi gifts.

As this occasion is such a blissful and a happier one, below are affectionate heartstouching messages, wishes and quotes which you can send to your brother with Rakhi online on Raksha Bandhan 2023.



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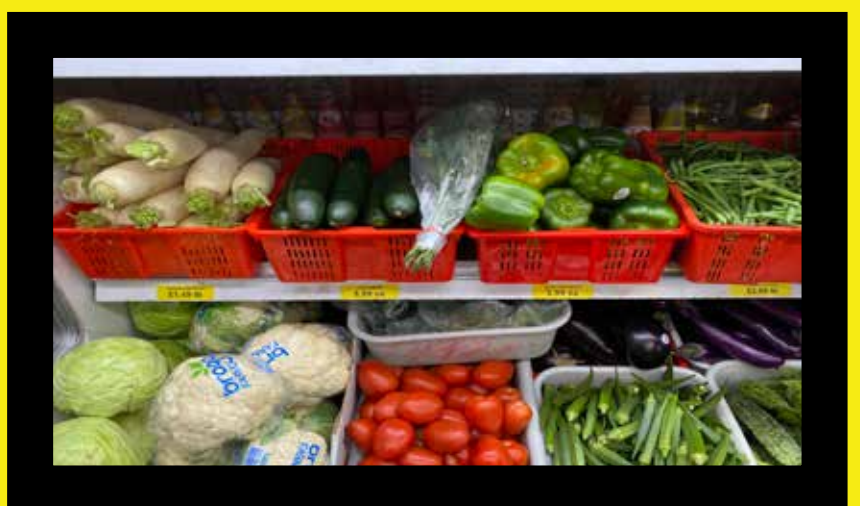
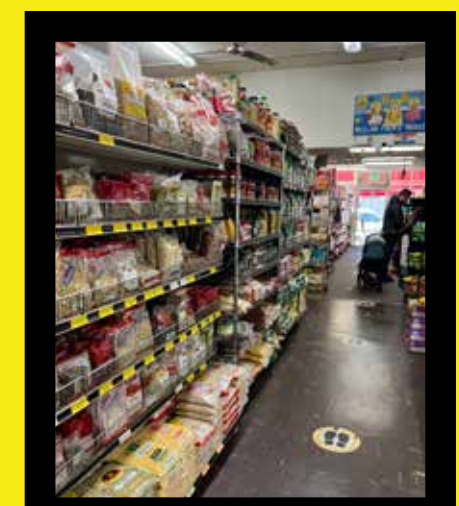
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Natasha Syed from San Bruno spots desserts as she shops at Neelam Pacific





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Fiji News

GCC Chair calls for urgent action to address social decay and restore stability

The rising drug problem in Fiji is a major concern, with many viewing it as a sign of moral decay, reflecting deeper issues within society that must be addressed urgently. Great Council of Chiefs Chairman, Ratu Viliame Seruvakula told *fijivillage News* that chiefs across the country are alarmed by increasing social issues, including drug abuse and sexual violence among youths. He believes these problems stem from the erosion of traditional values and weakened community support. As a former military officer, he recalls Fiji's stable transition

to independence, but the 1987, 2000 and 2006 coups marked a turning point, leading to a decline in respect for law and order. He believes this breakdown has fueled today's social issues, with drugs like marijuana and methamphetamine moving freely, and while people would once be concerned, weakened law and order has led to those concerns being lost in chaos. With rising crime and drug use, leaders, including chiefs, are urging immediate action from authorities, families, and communities to restore stability before the situation worsens.



Fuel and gas prices to increase tomorrow

People will need to pay more for fuel and gas as the prices will go up tomorrow. The Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission says the price of unleaded fuel will increase from \$2.67 to \$2.69 per litre, premix will increase from \$2.51 to \$2.53 per litre, and diesel will increase from \$2.31 to \$2.33 per litre. Kerosene will increase by 2 cents from \$1.72 to \$1.80 per litre. Gas prices will also increase from tomorrow, with the cost of a 4.5kg cylinder, increasing from \$15.53 to \$15.78. The 12kg cylinder will increase by 67 cents from \$41.42 to \$42.09, while Auto gas will increase from \$2.25 to \$2.28.



3 court martial cases for Fiji Navy will be dealt with shortly

Three court martial proceedings are pending which include the case of the RFNS Puamau crew members which will start shortly after the completion of the pending ones. This has been confirmed by the Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs Pio Tikoduadua. Tikoduadua stresses the officers should follow the law to uphold the law. He says they have also completed the investigations for RFNS Timo which suffered slight damages while berthing at the naval base. Tikoduadua says the maritime domain is Fiji's future, as 90 percent of things that pose a threat to Fiji come from the sea whether it is above the sea, over the sea or below the sea and that is a clear message of

where the government will build capacity and the Navy needs to build heavy and strong resources around it. Tikoduadua says it is unfortunate the Navy has had some mishaps in the past but every institution has got its problems and flaws and the idea of possibly positioning Navy resources in areas like Lau and Vanua Levu could be a strategic move to better safeguard Fiji's maritime interests, especially with the growing threats in the region. He says right now the Navy has to look after the maritime areas and the officers have to be mindful of the work they execute while protecting our waters and welfare of the people.



Fiji News

Tadulala aims to inspire

Rapheal Bruce Tadulala, a proud son of Nawaikama, Gau in the province of Lomaiviti, Fiji is setting out on an exciting academic journey to greatness. As a recent graduate of Tavua College, he has enrolled at The University of the South Pacific (USP) to pursue a Bachelor of Education (Geography and History) degree with a dream of becoming a dedicated secondary school teacher. With an upbringing sustained through farming, Tadulala acknowledged his grandparents for their love, commitment and dedication in raising him. "My grandparents have always been my greatest source of strength and inspiration. Their hard work and unwavering sacrifices to ensure I have a chance at a brighter future have shaped who I am today," he said proudly. "I am grateful to my grandparents for instilling in me the value of perseverance, humility and gratitude." "Everything I do reflects their love and dedication, and pursuing my education is about achieving my dreams and honouring their efforts." "They have selflessly given so much to me and for that, I don't want to let them down." His decision to pursue a career in education is deeply personal, as he aspires to follow in the footsteps of his namesake, who is an English teacher based



in Hong Kong. "His dedication to shaping young minds and his commitment to education inspires me deeply," he said. "He has shown me that education is not just about teaching subjects but about empowering individuals, opening doors to opportunities, and transforming lives. I hope to make a meaningful impact in the lives of my future students, especially those from rural communities like mine." "I want to inspire them to dream big, work hard, and

realise that their circumstances do not define their potential to be successful in life." "This is my way of giving back to my community and honouring the legacy of my namesake." Tadulala said undertaking studies at USP's Laucala Campus in Suva was the first step to realising his dream. "I have done my research and learnt so many things about USP and the programmes it offers. The multicultural community that it has is something I am looking forward to," he said.

Tadulala also encouraged others to seize the opportunity to study at USP. "USP provides countless opportunities to grow and succeed. Don't wait until the last minute to enrol – make the most of this chance now." "The University has many students support services available and I know this will help me and many others succeed with our studies here on campus." As he begins his journey to inspire and educate the next generation, Rapheal Bruce Tadulala exempli-

fies determination, ambition, and the power of education to transform lives. The University of the South Pacific is accepting applications for Semester 1, 2025. Interested students can visit our website at www.usp.ac.fj to explore our wide range of internationally accredited programmes from our six schools and two centres. Apply Now at www.usp.ac.fj/apply Continuing and new students must also register for courses via <https://studentsols.usp.ac.fj/>

Australia commits \$14.5m for CWM Hospital infrastructure upgrade

Services at the CWM Hospital are expected to improve as the Government of Australia has committed another \$14.5 million for infrastructure upgrades for the hospital. The announcement was made today by the Australian High Commissioner Ewen McDonald while launching the Colonial War Memorial Hospital Priority Infrastructure Plan. He says these funds will target projects identified in the plan, and most importantly, they will commence implementation immediately, ensuring improvements to CWM are achieved over the coming months. McDonald says in addition, Australia will also work with the Fiji Government to establish a staff project management unit within the Ministry of Health and Medical Services. He says

this is something the Minister for Health and the Deputy Prime Minister has talked about in the past, and the reason they think this is so important is because it will accelerate Fiji's ability to deliver health infrastructure using its own funds by bringing technical expertise in procurement and project management. Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka says the Priority Infrastructure Planning Report that they launched today was put together by a technical team of experts and infrastructure engineers after a thorough assessment of the existing infrastructure. He says the report identified the immediate work requirements for the hospital, while the master plan is being developed for the longer term. Rabuka says the Minister of Health has also told him

that the lift is also part of the priority and the implementation of the recommended actions and work that is in the report will

ensure that the existing CWM Hospital continues to serve the people of Fiji for the next few years while the structural and

layout works continue until the new CWM Hospital becomes operational.





Dolphin Island, the Definition of Exclusivity, Fiji

Viti Levu 147/148 Naisoso Island, Fiji

Alex van Heeren, of Huka Lodge fame, designed Dolphin Island to be like no other. A concept of luxury in deliberate isolation, complemented by unspoiled natural beauty and true privacy, surrounded by gin clear waters. The large main bure enjoys an elevated position above the infinity pool, and the four guest bure suites featuring heart timber floors, plaster walls, stone tiles, wooden shutters, high ceilings and the latest in air-conditioned comfort. A hilltop honeymoon bure, private beach, jetty and substantial back-of-house facilities complete the picture. There is ample room to increase the accommodation inventory. Dolphin Island can be purchased in its entirety, by negotiation, OR Register interest to purchase one or more of only 12 shares in a yet to be formed NewZealand, company which will own the island outright, for US\$1 million per 1/12 th share and secure exclusive use of freehold Dolphin Island for a month each year of ownership. Dolphin Island, is just 20 minutes by boat from shore, on the tip of Viti Levu, Fiji, 2.5 hours by private car from Nadi International Airport. Float planes and helicopters offer an alternative connection.

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Fiji News

Commission has teeth but we will not pass judgments or pronounce anybody guilty – Dr Brand

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Chair Dr Marcus Brand says the Commission will not pass judgments or pronounce anybody guilty as they are not a judicial body. While responding to a question from the media if the Commission will be interacting with those who are responsible for the trauma, Dr Brand says the Commission was set up to promote social accountability, and it will not pass a verdict on anyone. He says since they are not a judicial body, they can talk about everything, even those things that are covered by immunity, but the purpose is truth-telling and truth documentation and not finding anybody guilty in a judicial sense. The Chair says they do have authority, according to the Act, to ask people to come before the Commission to give evidence. He adds they will try to use this power sparingly and also try to promote willingness for people to come forward, including those responsible for some of the acts that occurred in the past.



Flood Warning for Ba, Flash Flood Warning for all low-lying and flash flood prone areas in Viti Levu and Vanua Levu

A Flood Warning is now in force for flood prone areas adjacent to and downstream of Ba River while a Flash Flood Warning remains in force for all low-lying, flash flood prone areas and small streams of Vanua Levu and parts of Viti Levu including Naitasiri, Tailevu through Rakiraki, Tavua, Ba and Lautoka. A Heavy Rain Warning remains in force for the Central and Northern Division, Yasawa, Lau and Lomaiviti groups. The Nadi Weather Office says flash flooding of some low-lying areas, informal settlements, small streams and Irish crossings will lead to disruptions in traffic, surface flooding is expected on roads due to poor drainage and risk of isolated flooding of areas downstream of major rivers and coastal areas especially during high tide. The Weather Office says a trough of low pressure lies slow-moving to the West



of Fiji with an embedded shallow low pressure system located near Kadavu which is associated with clouds, showers and rain. People should expect more rain as a few embedded low pressure systems are expected to affect Fiji until next week.

Fiji News

Hostel fee increase for FNU temporarily postponed— Prof. Prasad

Great news for thousands of Fiji National University students who wish to live in the university hostel as the increase in the hostel fees has been temporarily postponed. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Professor Biman Prasad revealed this to fji village News after he had a meeting with the Minister for Education Aseri Radrodro, the FNU, the Fiji Higher Education Commission, and the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission today. He says they have agreed that the imposition of the increase in hostel fees will be postponed until the stakeholders have gone through a proper process. Professor Prasad says the decision for an increase in hostel fees has been postponed until further processes and discussions take place between the stakeholders. Meanwhile, many FNU students have raised serious concerns as FNU accommodation rates have increased, while the allowance they receive through the Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service remains the same. A medical student at the Pasifika Campus, who is a National Toppers Scheme scholarship recipient, earlier told fji village News that the

rate has increased from \$1,200 to \$1,800 per semester, or from \$9.50 to \$15 per day. He says they receive \$3,400 per semester and will now be left with \$1,600 for food, transportation, and other educational needs. The medical student adds students not on the National Toppers Scheme receive \$2,500 through TSLs and would be suffering even more. The student also says that no reason

has been given for the increase, and the Student Association has been raising the issue since last December, but the rate remains unchanged. Another student is imploring the university and the government to empathize with the students to consider their request to either reinstate the previous rate or come up with a lesser increase or to increase their TSLs allowance. FNU had earlier said that they deemed it

necessary to increase the hostel fees to keep pace with rising costs, including maintenance, utilities, and upgrades to improve the safety and quality of student accommodation. They say they increased the fee after six years since the last revision. FNU says these investments aim to ensure that students continue to benefit from a secure and conducive living environment. They say the university

had engaged a registered valuer to conduct a review of the hostel rates to determine the best rationale for the current market rate. FNU says the proposed increases in rates went through the university processes such as consultation with the senior management, FNU Students Association, the Financial Resources Committee, and the Council before a green light was given for implementation.



Commissioners of Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission sworn in today

Five Commissioners of the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission were sworn in today at the State House in the presence of President Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu and other distinguished guests. The five commissioners include Dr Marcus Brand, Sekove Naqiolevu, Rachna Shiv Shri Nath, Asilika Laqeretabua and Rajendra Hirral Dass.

Dr Brand is originally from Austria and has served in international positions for more than 25 years working with the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union and others, and has lived and worked in Europe, South and Southeast Asia and the United States. Naqiolevu is a

well-respected member of the Pacific legal fraternity, having served as the Chief Magistrate of Fiji from 1992 to 1997, and served as a Judge of the High Court and Court of Appeal of the Solomon Islands from 2005 to 2010.

Nath is a human rights advisor, strategic communications specialist, journalist and community leader. She is skilled and recognised as an expert in strategic communications, stakeholder management, media management, documentary production, scriptwriting, and digital and social media. Laqeretabua is a leadership coach, facilitator and trainer, committed to transformational leadership. She is the Principal Consultant and sole director of

SALT Inc. Ltd, a development consultancy in operation in Suva, Fiji since 2009. Dass is an experienced and dedicated retired Airline Transport Pilot

with a distinguished 43-year career at Fiji Airways. He successfully advanced from a cadetship program to the rank of Captain, demonstrating excep-

tional leadership, professionalism, and commitment to his career. Meanwhile, Dr. Brand has also been sworn in as the Chairman of the Commission.



Fiji News

Bainimarama and Qiliho's appeal hearing date to be set today

The hearing date for the appeal against conviction, sentencing and bail pending appeal in the USP case of former Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama and former Police Commissioner Sitiveni Qiliho, will be determined by the Fiji Court of Appeal today.

After an assessment by the Appeal Court Judge, Justice Chandana Prematilaka on the submissions received by both counsels, he will set the hearing date. Bainimarama and Qiliho's lawyer, Devanesh Sharma has appealed the conviction of the two.

Sharma has also appealed on the grounds that Chief Justice Salesi Temo erred in law as the sentencing court has the jurisdiction to not record a conviction, and that Chief Justice Temo also refused to

recuse himself when an application was made based on him attacking Magistrate Sei-

ni Puamau. The bail pending appeal only applies to Qiliho as Bainimarama was granted

an early release on the 8th of November. Qiliho is serving a 2 year prison sentence for the

charge of abuse of office. Stay with us for developments.



PRIME MINISTER RABUKA AND PRESIDENT MAAMAU PRESIDE OVER A BILATERAL MEETING, MARKING A NEW CHAPTER IN FIJI-KIRIBATI RELATIONS

A bilateral meeting this afternoon between Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon Sitiveni Rabuka and President of the Republic of Kiribati, His Excellency Taneti Maamau, marks a momentous achievement in Fiji-Kiribati relations, reaffirming our shared commitment to regional peace, unity and prosperity, as Pacific Vuvale. A broad range of new cooperation areas was discussed during the high-level meeting between the two leaders and senior government officials from both countries, focusing on climate change, oceans, economic growth, trade, tourism, defence and security, and labour mobility.

The meeting underscored the renewed commitment to deepen bilateral engagements through exploring new initiatives aimed at empowering people of the two nations and promoting economic growth and regional solidarity. In the discussions, the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Development Cooperation was at the top of the agenda. The leaders agreed to renew the MOU which is currently under con-

sultation, and it will reinforce the strong foundation for the years ahead, through strategic partnership that advances the social and economic priorities that are at the heart of the renewed cooperation.

The leaders rendered their support for this important initiative and to ensure the work is completed within agreed timelines. Prime Minister Rabuka took the opportunity to congratulate President Maamau on his recent electoral victory and reaffirmed Fiji's commitment to further strengthen the relations between our two nations that share historical and cultural ties. Furthermore, Prime Minister Rabuka highlighted Fiji's Foreign Policy White Paper as a guiding framework for Fiji's global engagements over the next decade, placing the Pacific region at the heart of all development efforts.

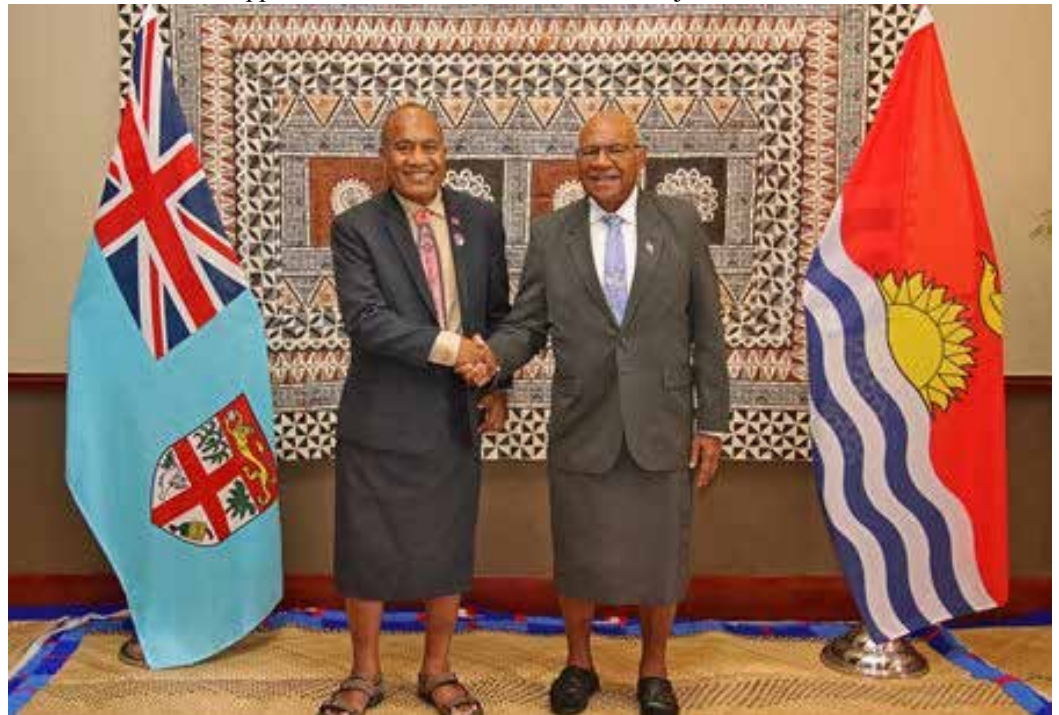
The two leaders shared their perspectives on the pressing global challenges such as climate change and evolving geopolitics, which will require a unified Pacific voice and representation at the global and regional fora. Prime Minister

Rabuka elaborated on the Ocean of Peace declaration which will be considered at the upcoming Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in September in Solomon Islands this year. The unique initiative will be the Pacific's contribution towards global peace and security. In conclusion Prime Minister Rabuka thanked President Maamau and the people of Kiribati for their continued support to

Fiji and expressed optimism that relations will continue to grow from strength to strength, bringing new opportunities for peace and prosperity.

President Maamau, in his response commended Prime Minister Rabuka for his exceptional leadership, vision and foresight for Fiji and the Pacific region. He extended his heartfelt appreciation to Prime Minister Rabuka and the Fiji

Government senior officials for the productive discussions on building a stronger foundation for future cooperation that will benefit both nations, and the broader Pacific family. The meeting marked a pivotal moment in the history of Fiji-Kiribati relations, our cultural ties and shared aspirations to advance peace, prosperity and a sustainable future for our nations and our Pacific Vuvale.



Fiji News

CWMH PRIORITY INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING REPORT LAUNCHED



Prime Minister Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka said that the Colonial War Memorial Hospital has faced poor maintenance planning and work over the years that has resulted in the dilapidated state of the public infrastructure. Speaking during the launch of the CWMH Priority Infrastructure Planning (PIP)

Report today (January 31), PM Rabuka said the implementation of the recommended actions and works in the report would ensure that the existing CWM Hospital continued to serve the people for the next few years while the structural and layout works continued until the new CWM Hospital became opera-

tional.

The Colonial War Memorial Hospital Priority Infrastructure Plan includes a list of infrastructure upgrades required to enhance patient experience and ensure continued delivery of high-quality healthcare. Australian High Commissioner to Fiji Ewen McDonald commit-



ted an additional \$14.5 million to infrastructure upgrades at CWMH. HC McDonald said the upgrades identified in the plan allow the current hospital to be operational until a new hospital is realised. “Australia is thrilled to have partnered with the Fiji Government to deliver the Priority Infrastructure Plan,” Mr. McDonald said. “While the plan is critical, it is only the first step—it cannot by itself deliver improvements in patient care.” PM Rabuka further urged everyone to continue supporting the Government’s efforts in

improving the health services, including critical infrastructure such as the CWM Hospital. The PIP was compiled by a technical team of experts and infrastructural engineers after a thorough assessment of the existing infrastructure. The National Development Plan 2025–2029 and Vision 2050 outline the Coalition Government’s commitment to improving health care by modernising and maintaining healthcare facilities to meet increasing demands for quality health services that the people of Fiji deserves.

SERUWAIA IS A NEW HOMEOWNER AT LAGILAGI HOUSING

“I miss my husband, and I wish he were here.” These were the sentiments shared by 62-year-old Seruwaia Vere, who was one of the 36 recipients of the two-bedroom flat under the Lagilagi Housing Project on January 29, 2025. While the new flat brought happiness and security, a ray of sadness surrounded Ms. Vere as she felt the absence of her husband. “My husband passed away four years ago, and I miss him because he was supposed to be here too,” she said. After residing in Jittu Estate for 11 years, Ms. Vere’s family finally got a home of their own. “I’m so excited and happy that after ten years, I have got a new house. I am very glad that I got a secure house to live in with my two daughters and a granddaughter.” “I faced many challenges at my previous house, as whenever it was raining or hurricane season, I would be scared that my house would be damaged or collapse. Now, in my new house, I won’t be scared anymore.” A total of 36 families were handed over occupancy offer letters at the Lagilagi



lagi Housing Estate on January 29 by the Prime Minister Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka. The Lagilagi Housing Project was initiated

more than a decade ago by the People’s Community Network Charitable Trust to provide low-cost housing for families

currently living in informal settlements, particularly in Jittu Estate. Citing the urgent need to complete the unfinished units,

the Government, through Cabinet’s endorsement in January 2024, transferred the project to the Public Rental Board (PRB).

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Fiji News

MINISTRY CONCLUDES SURVEY IN FIJI MUSLIM LEAGUE SETTLEMENT IN NABUA

The Ministry of Housing and Local Government has concluded the social survey in the Nabua Fiji Muslim League settlement. This was confirmed by the Minister for Housing and Local Government, Hon. Maciu Nalumisa, yesterday (28.01.25), stating that meetings with the Fiji Muslim League were required for possible actions. In a talanoa session with the tenants of the Fiji Muslim League settlement in Nabua in December last year, Minister Nalumisa stated a team would be conducting a Socio-Economic Survey in the settlement, which would provide the ministry a clear view into mapping out a strategy for relocation. "So, what we are doing now is collecting information and analysing all

the data that we have received because we need to go back to the Cabinet to actually come up with strategies, very practical strategies on how we can address them," Minister Nalumisa stated. "We also need to have more meetings now with the Fijian Muslim League on the way forward because we have requested some time for the ministry to look for land so that we can start relocating those families." He said the ministry was working on a 12-month timeline.

"That's something that we have already requested from the Fiji Muslim League. "Currently, from the ministry's side, we are still analysing the data that we have received from those surveys. Once that is

done, then we need to come up with strategies on how we can relocate those families because some may want to relocate to the village because

some may want to maybe give the land that is offered by the housing authority." Late last year, many families residing in the Fiji Muslim League settle-

ment in Nabua were faced with eviction notices, after which Minister Nalumisa met with the tenants to look for a solution to the situation.



TRADITIONAL CEREMONY ACCORDED TO WELCOME PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI, HIS EXCELLENCY TANETI MAAMAU

The Fiji Government accorded a traditional ceremony this morning to officially welcome the President of the Republic of Kiribati, His Excellency Taneti Maamau, for his State Visit to Fiji this week. The ceremony was attended by senior members of the Government led by Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka. Held at the Grand Pacific Hotel, the event was attended by cabinet ministers, members of Parliament, Permanent Secretaries, members of the diplomatic corps and invited guests. It demonstrated the unique and diverse Fijian culture with profound respect extended to President Maamau and the people of Kiribati, reflecting on deep appreciation for the longstanding relations and cooperation cherished between the two nations. President Maamau's visit to Fiji underscores the significance of regional solidarity and the shared values the two nations embrace as the Pacific Vuvale. The state visit marks a new chapter in Fiji-Kiribati relations and further deepens the foundation for future cooperation for the mutual benefit of the two nations and the broader Pacific family.



President Maamau expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Prime Minister Rabuka and the people of Fiji for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to him. He reaffirmed Kiribati's commitment to further strengthen the bilateral relations and development cooperation with Fiji by working closely to navigate through regional and multilat-

eral issues that hold importance to both the nations and the Pacific family. Further, President Maamau acknowledged that Fiji-Kiribati cooperation is of utmost importance and expressed optimism that relations will continue to grow from strength to strength. Following the welcoming ceremony, President Maamau proceeded

to the State House to meet with His Excellency the President, Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu before engaging in a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Rabuka. The high-level discussions will explore new opportunities to elevate cooperation and address pressing global challenges that have implications for national undertakings.

President Maamau's visit to Fiji further builds on the positive momentum established during Prime Minister Rabuka's visit to Kiribati in 2023, which led to the restoration of the unity within the Pacific Islands Forum family. The President will return to Kiribati this Thursday upon completion of his state visit to Fiji.

Fiji News

FIJI PARTICIPATES AT THE 48TH SESSION OF UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW WORKING GROUP

The Fiji Delegation successfully presented Fiji's Human Rights Report during its Fourth Universal Periodic Review to the United Nations Human Rights Council on Wednesday 22 January 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland. The delegation was led by the Attorney-General Honourable Graham Leung and included the Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Ambassador Luke Daunivalu, Principal Legal Officers Ms Suliana Taukei and Ms Geraldine Naigulevu. In delivering the Fiji Government's opening statement, the Attorney-General reiterated Government's commitment to advancing and protecting the fundamental human rights principles through its robust national framework, strong institutions and national policies. He informed the Council that Fiji had implemented the majority of the recommendation from Fiji's last Universal Period Review, most notably, the repeal of the Media Industry

Development Act (MIDA) in April 2023, which was a landmark step in restoring media freedom, allowing journalists to report independently without fear of prosecution. The Attorney-General highlighted the Government's efforts in strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment in the areas of leadership and economic participation, climate change and in the elimination of violence against women and girls. He stated that the Government is focusing on a coordinated effort of preventative measures in addressing gender based violence, and the implementation of strategies for a transformative institutional capacity development across Government. A historic milestone is the launch of the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (2023-2028) where Fiji became the first Pacific Island Country alongside Australia, to develop an inclusive, evidence-based plan aimed at eliminat-

ing gender-based violence and empower women and girls. On the environmental front, the Attorney-General informed the Human Rights Council of Fiji's efforts on climate resilience and environmental justice such as nature-based seawalls, the National Adaptation Registry, and community-based disaster risk management programs. The Attorney-General also informed the Human Rights Council on the various empowerment and awareness programs undertaken, in line with the Government's commitment to ensuring equal access to justice for all Fijians. During the interactive dialogue, the Attorney-General stated that while Fiji is delayed in its reporting obligation to the various treaty bodies, Fiji is committed to fulfilling its obligations and has established its Human Rights Task Force to facilitate better coordination between Government ministries and departments on human rights issues. The Attorney-General also called on devel-



FIJI GOVERNMENT

opment partners for continued support through resources and technical assistance to aid in the implementation of recommendations Fiji received over 209 recommendations from member

states during the review which are currently being considered. The Report of the UPR Working Group on Fiji's review was adopted, on Friday, 24 January 2025.

BULIKULA AND TABUA SUBSEA CABLES LAND IN FIJI

Today, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade Cooperatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communication Hon. Manoa Kamikamica announced that the Bulikula and Tabua subsea cables have landed in Vatuwaga, Suva. This milestone marks a significant step forward for Fiji's digital infrastructure with two more connections from these two subsea cables landing in Natadola in the coming days. In total, four new cable connections will land in Fiji; two in Suva and two in Natadola. The infrastructure will enhance international connectivity, linking Fiji directly to the United States, Australia, Japan, and South America via subsea cables. These subsea cable systems are set to transform Fiji into a growing hub for digital connectivity in the Pacific. The cables are being laid as part of the Pacific Connect initiative, a collaborative effort with Fiji, Google and other partners to increase the reliability and resilience of digital connectivity in Fiji and the Pacific. In November 2024, Google broke

ground on its ICT facility in Natadola, which will host terrestrial infrastructure to support the Bulikula and Tabua subsea cable systems. "The landing of these new cables represents a significant moment for Fiji. This infrastructure will not only connect us more deeply with the world but will empower our people with the tools needed to thrive in a digital age. We also welcome investors to Fiji,

and we will continue to support current and new investors as we work towards strengthening and diversifying our economy," said DPM Kamikamica. "Creating a premier connectivity hub in Fiji with the arrival of the Bulikula and Tabua subsea cables is an exciting and significant effort as we start 2025," said Brian Quigley, VP, Global Network Infrastructure, Google Cloud. "These subsea cable systems

are the product of close collaboration among several partners including the Fiji Government and FINTEL and will help bridge the digital divide by providing improved connectivity for Fiji to the United States, Australia, Japan and Chile and other countries in the Pacific region." Key stakeholders for these projects include the Fiji National Provident Fund and Fiji International Telecom-

munications Ltd. (FINTEL) and are a powerful example of a unified effort to bridge the digital divide and ensure that no Fijian is left behind in this age of technology. The Fiji Government is committed to enhancing its digital landscape and fostering economic growth through improved technological infrastructure and is appreciative of all those involved in this project.



Fiji News

FIJI WELCOMES PRESIDENT MAAMAU

In the spirit of Pacific Vuvale, Fiji will be welcoming the President of the Republic of Kiribati, His Excellency Taneti Maamau, through a State Visit this week from Monday 27th to Thursday 30th January 2025. In recognition of the importance of the longstanding relationship between Fiji and Kiribati, full state protocols will be accorded to His Excellency, President Maamau throughout his stay in Fiji. President Maamau will arrive in Fiji today (27.01.25) with a range of key engagements scheduled during his visit, including a traditional ceremony of welcome and a meeting with Fiji's Head of State, His Excellency, President Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu. His visit will continue with a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka. The two leaders will have the opportunity to discuss a range of cooperation opportunities and will be an avenue to exchange views on



how best the Pacific region can work closely to aptly navigate through emerging global chal-

lenges that have implications on national priorities. The visit resonates with the friendship

and cooperation established with Prime Minister Rabuka's visit to Tarawa, Kiribati, in 2023

that reinvigorated the unity and solidarity of the Pacific Islands Forum family.

\$30 MILLION INVESTMENT BOOSTS LOCAL ECONOMY

The \$30 million Nausori Plaza, a modern commercial complex, marks a significant milestone in Nausori's pursuit of economic development and urban revitalisation. Officiating at the opening ceremony, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, Hon. Biman Prasad, emphasised that the plaza has already created employment opportunities for many in the local community and will continue to support jobs in retail, hospitality, and other sectors. "The plaza provides a platform for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to grow and succeed, contributing to the revitalisation of local businesses and industries. Local employees will gain valuable skills and expertise, enhancing the capacity of our workforce," said Hon. Prasad. He further noted that this development would have a multiplier effect, spurring additional investments and boosting economic activity in Nausori and nearby towns and villages. DPM Prasad highlighted the Coalition Government's commitment to fostering investment, job creation, and sustainable

economic growth. "We recognise the importance of maintaining political stability, investing in critical infrastructure, and ensuring a business-friendly environment that supports both local and foreign investors. Projects like the Nausori Plaza are vital to achieving these goals," he said. "This development aligns perfectly with our national agenda of inclusive growth, which seeks to empower communities, improve livelihoods, and create a more resilient economy for all Fijians." At the same event, which also marked the Chinese New Year celebrations, DPM Prasad acknowledged the profound contributions of the Chinese community in Fiji. "Though small in number, the Chinese community has had an immeasurable impact on our nation's history and development," said Hon. Prasad. "From the early settlers in the 19th century, Chinese migrants brought with them entrepreneurial spirit, a strong work ethic, and a desire to contribute to Fiji's growth." He highlighted their role in advancing businesses, agriculture, and new industries, underscor-



ing their enduring legacy in shaping Fiji's society. "Over the past year, our relationship with China has deepened significantly, extending beyond economic collaboration to include cultural and personal ties. The visit of Mr. Li Qun, China's Minister of Culture and Tourism, further solidified this relationship, showcasing our

commitment to stronger cultural exchange and cooperation," he added. Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Fiji, Zou Jian, also spoke at the event, reflecting on the strong ties between the two nations. "China-Fiji relations stand at a new historical starting point, at a crucial moment of building on past achievements and

forging ahead. China will work together with Fijian friends to recall the aspirations of establishing diplomatic ties, deepen mutual respect and beneficial cooperation, promote people-to-people exchanges, and move forward towards a community with a shared future for China and Fiji," said Ambassador Zou Jian.

Fiji News

FIJI & CANADA RENEW COMMITMENT FOR A STRONGER COOPERATION

The Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua, received a courtesy call from the newly appointed Non-Resident High Commissioner of Canada to Fiji, His Excellency Mr. Keith Smith. Assistant Minister Qereqeretabua congratulated High Commissioner Smith and reaffirmed Fiji's commitment to further advance the cooperation with Canada in economy and trade, air connectivity, tourism, climate change adaptation and oceans, agriculture. Further, the Assistant Minister underscored the importance of the Oceans of Peace Concept led by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka, and key priorities of Fiji's first Foreign Policy White Paper and the National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050, all of which supports Fiji's commitment to building economic resilience, people empowerment and good governance. Hon. Qereqeretabua thanked Canada for its continued support to Fiji and further conveyed Fiji's readiness to engage in dialogue on issues of mutual interest and further firmed up targeted initiatives aimed at improving the livelihood of communities in Fiji. The prospects of establishing a fully-fledged Canada High Commission in Fiji in the



not-too-distant future is much welcomed news. Prospects for deepening of relations and opportunities across sectors can only develop and gain strength from there. Fiji's Ambassador to the United States of America, Ratu Ilisoni Vuidreketi, who is also accredited to Canada is expected to present his credentials to Her Excellency, The Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of

Canada in the coming months. This established presence, will further advance the enduring partnership between Fiji and Canada. In his remarks, High Commissioner Smith reaffirmed his dedication to advancing Fiji-Canada relations, expressing optimism on the enormous opportunities ahead by working together to promote initiatives for the betterment of the two nations and its peoples. High Commissioner Smith expressed

gratitude for the warm reception and hospitality accorded to him during his visit to Fiji as he presented his credentials to the President of the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu at the State House, marking the formal beginning of his diplomatic representation. The introductory meeting held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters in Suva on Thursday 23/1/25, marked an important step to strengthen

the bilateral and multilateral engagements between Fiji and Canada. Canada aims to expand its economic and trade cooperation with Fiji and, in so doing, will send its Senior Trade Commissioner based in New Zealand to scope for opportunities. As an important development partner, Canada aspires to elevate engagements with Fiji and the broader Pacific region, particularly in promoting long-term prosperity, peace and security.

NORTHERNERS URGED TO VISIT GOV. REACH PROGRAM AT NAPUKA SECONDARY SCHOOL

The importance of bringing essential services closer to the people has been emphasised today at the opening of the Rights Empowerment and Cohesion for Rural and Urban Fijians (REACH) Stakeholders Outreach Program at the Napuka Secondary School Grounds in Tunuloa, Vanua Levu. The three-day awareness event, which was opened by the Assistant Minister for Justice, Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu, is a significant poverty reduction initiative spearheaded by the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection to improve access to services and information for residents in the various communities within the Tikina of Tunuloa, Natewa, and Cakaudrove. "Today marks yet another significant step in our

commitment to bring critical services closer to our people and to promote social cohesion, empowerment, and inclusiveness across Fiji. The Rights, Empowerment, and Cohesion for Rural and Urban Fijians (REACH) Programme is a pioneering initiative aimed at promoting peace-building, inclusiveness, and awareness of the social, economic, and legal rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. Through the REACH Programme, we are able to strengthen institutional capacities to deliver essential services while fostering a culture of awareness and empowerment," he said. The REACH Programme has achieved remarkable milestones since its inception in 2015. Assistant Minister Niudamu stated that

the program has conducted 59 missions across all Divisions in Fiji, benefiting 1,438 communities, 152 districts, and 14 provinces, including Rotuma. "These missions have reached 78% of districts across the nation, reflecting our continued success in providing mobile awareness raising and service delivery to communities in need," he added. The REACH Stakeholders Outreach Program brings together 26 key stakeholders who are taking their services directly to the people. Participating organisations include: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources,



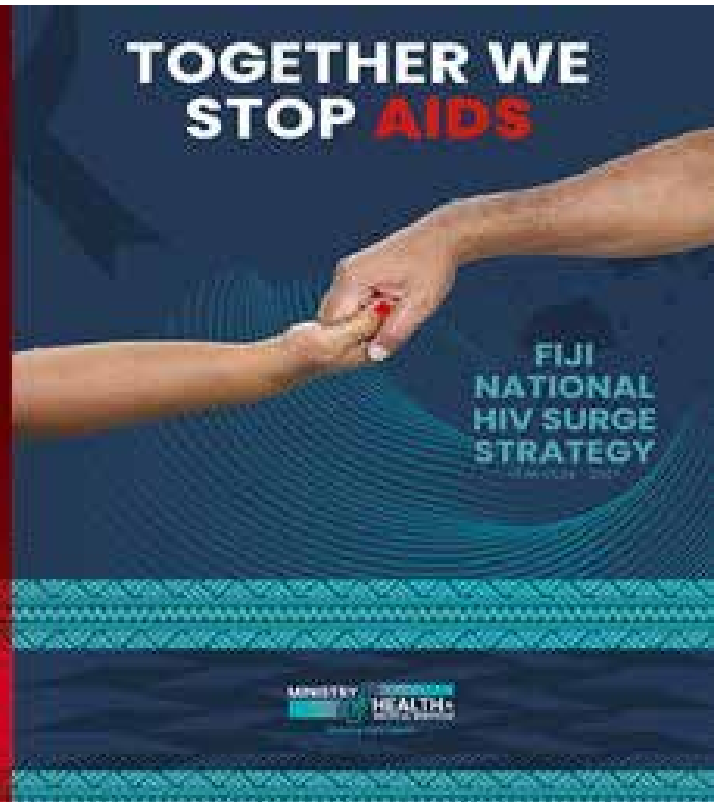
Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development & National Disaster Management, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, Fiji Police Force, Fiji Reserve Bank of Fiji, Land Transport Authority (LTA), Legal Aid Commission, National Provident Fund, University of the South Pacific. The program exemplifies the government's commitment to

fostering inclusiveness and addressing the unique challenges faced by rural and maritime communities. It serves as a platform for promoting awareness of constitutional rights, social cohesion, and empowerment. The REACH Stakeholders Outreach Program will run from 22nd to 24th January at the Napuka Secondary School Grounds in Tunuloa.

Fiji News

HEALTH MINISTRY LAUNCHES ROBUST RESPONSE PLANS AMID RISING HIV CASES

Injecting Drug Use (IDU) was the primary mode of transmission for 223 out of 1093 new HIV cases reported between January and September last year. This was highlighted by the Minister for Health and Medical Services, Hon. Atonio Lalabalavu during the launch of the HIV Outbreak Response Plan and HIV Surge Strategy 2024-2027 yesterday. The HIV Outbreak Response Plan is a focused 90-day effort to fast-track immediate, high-impact interventions to contain the outbreak, while the HIV Surge Strategy 2024-2027, approved by the Cabinet in September last year, serves as our long-term roadmap for strengthening health systems to respond effectively to HIV. Following 1093 new HIV cases recorded between January and September last year, Fiji met the definition for an outbreak of HIV nationally. The 52 percent of the 1093 new cases reported are linked to care, among which 223 cases are mainly caused by Injecting Drug Use (IDU), 202 transmitted by sexual transmission, while an additional 129 cases are currently under evaluation to determine their primary transmission routes. Alarming-



ly, those who inject drugs and share used needles are 29 times more likely to contract HIV. To address this, the Ministry will introduce targeted interventions to reduce new cases among injecting drug users, including harm reduction programs and greater accessibility to prevention services. Minister Lalabalavu said the 90-Day Plan, currently in execution, was de-

signed to fast-track immediate, high-impact interventions in the battle against HIV, which was believed to be spurred by the current illicit drug epidemic in the country. "This dual approach reflects immediate containment through the Outbreak Response Plan and long-term system strengthening through the Surge Strategy." "It is essential to address the current crisis and build

resilience against future challenges." Minister Lalabalavu emphasised the urgency of collective action in addressing the rising HIV cases in Fiji. "The Ministry of Health cannot do this alone. Communities, civil society, faith-based organisations, private sector partners, and international allies must join us in raising awareness, reducing stigma, and ensur-

ing everyone affected by HIV receives the care and support they need." "This is not only a health issue but can potentially become an economic and developmental issue if we don't act now." Click on this link: <https://bit.ly/4hogxJ3> to access the Fiji National HIV Surge Strategy Booklet-2024-2027 (December 23, 2024 - FINAL)

A NEW BEGINNING FOR RUSIATE

"I reached out to the Office of the Prime Minister seeking information about the Rural Housing Assistance, and they advised me of the one-third, two-thirds policy. I accessed my FNPF savings for the one-third payment, while the Government covered the rest of the costs. I knew that making this sacrifice was a step towards a better future." These were the sentiments of Rusiate Delai, one of seven recipients who were handed the keys to their new homes. The homes were made possible through the Rural Housing Scheme, run by the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development, which supports families displaced by the closure of the Vatukoula Gold Mine. Now, these families call the villages of Delakado, Nabualau, and Natadrave in Tailevu their home. Back in 2006, everything changed for Rusiate when the company that he was

employed by at Vatukoula Gold Mine shut down, leaving him and many others without work. Faced with uncertainty, he made the tough decision to return to his village, unsure of what the future would hold. "Life in the village, however, wasn't always easy; earning money was slow, sometimes taking weeks or even months.

It wasn't easy; the days were long, and I had to rely on farming to make ends meet. But I kept pushing forward, doing whatever I could." Rusiate highlighted that it was not easy to be turned away every now and then with the last government, but he kept holding onto the belief that something better was coming. "It was frustrating when we were told we'd be assisted 'next month' but nothing eventuated. Waiting was hard, but I stayed hopeful. Eventually, when the Coalition Gov-

ernment stepped in, my housing project was completed." Under Scheme 2, applicants contribute one-third of the project cost in cash, while the Ministry funds the remaining two-thirds. The program offers: -Construction of new houses using approved 24' x 16' plans. -Extensions to existing structures, including kitchen and sanitation facilities. -Retrofitting homes to withstand Category 4 and 5 tropical cyclones. -Completion of unfinished structures. Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management Hon. Sakiasi Ditoka, spoke about the importance of the program, highlighting that it's not just about giving people houses but about giving families the stability they need to thrive. We want to ensure that people like Rusiate have homes that can withstand whatever nature throws their way. "This

isn't just the Government's work, the one-third contribution from the applicants shows their commitment to building a better life. It's a partnership that strengthens our communities." The Rural Housing Assistance Programme is more than just

about constructing homes. It's about building resilience. These homes are designed to withstand some of the strongest cyclones in the world, ensuring that families not only have shelter but a secure space to rebuild and thrive.



Fiji News

NADOI VILLAGE SEA PROJECT: A LIFELINE FOR THE COMMUNITY

"I'm so grateful that our village is situated inland, but our main mode of transport has always been by sea, and it's very expensive," she shared. "For us, especially the elderly, this boat will truly make a difference." This was highlighted by 79-year-old Elenoa Vakarewa of Nadoi village in Rewa, expressing her heartfelt gratitude for the new boat provided to Nadoi Village under the Sustainable Economic Advancement (SEA) Programme. Elenoa states that our grandchildren have to travel to Nabua or Nailili for school, often getting wet during bad weather. "We feel sorry for our grandchildren, but now, with this boat, things will be much easier. We've waited a long time for this, and we're truly thankful to the government for their support." Turaga ni Koro (village headman) of Nadoi, Taniela Kepa, sharing similar sentiments, highlighted that when he took up the role of village headman, he noticed that a significant portion of the money that was collected was spent on financing boat rides to transport goods and people from Nasali Landing to the village. "I took this issue to our village meetings, and I'm grateful that our plea was heard. This boat is a blessing. It will support fishing, farming, and other developmental projects in the vil-



lage. With our strategic development plan in place, this boat will play a key role in achieving our goals." Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management Sakiasi Ditoka commended the initiative, emphasising its broader impact. "This project is more than just about providing a boat; it's about empowering communities like Nadoi to access opportunities and improve their livelihoods," he said. "The SEA Programme reflects the govern-

ment's commitment to supporting rural and maritime communities, addressing transportation challenges, and fostering economic growth. By investing in infrastructure and resources, we are ensuring that no Fijian is left behind." The project, valued at \$21,333.05, was made possible through a cost-sharing arrangement, with the government contributing \$14,936.35 and the community raising \$6,396.70. It included the purchase of a 23-foot fibreglass boat and a

40-horsepower outboard engine. Project Impact The primary aim of the project is to provide safer and more reliable transportation for the villagers of Nadoi. With 61 households and a total population of 330, the boat will:

- Support income-generating activities such as fishing and farming.
- Provide easier access to markets.
- Create employment opportunities.
- Enhance resilience and improve the standard of living for rural communities.

Minister Ditoka further

highlighted the importance of partnerships in driving rural development. "The success of this project is a testament to what we can achieve when communities and government work together. This boat is not just a mode of transport; it's a tool for growth, resilience, and hope for the people of Nadoi." The Seafaring Entrepreneurial Assistance (SEA) Programme, managed by the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management, addresses critical issues such as poverty and rural-to-urban migration. By fostering economic growth and empowering individuals in rural and maritime areas, the initiative helps create sustainable opportunities for entrepreneurship and development. The Programme was previously administered by the Ministry of Finance, whereby 50 potential recipients from Fiji's maritime regions received a maximum grant of \$10,000 towards the purchase of a fully equipped and operational fibreglass boat. The Programme has been assigned to the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management in this financial year. This program, which includes the purchase of fibreglass boats and outboard engines, has been instrumental in improving transportation and supporting livelihoods.



Fiji News

FIJI HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION LABASA OFFICE OPENS

A historic moment for the Fiji Higher Education Commission was celebrated today in the Northern town of Labasa when Prime Minister Hon Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka opened their new office, marking a significant milestone in bringing higher education services closer to the grassroots level. The new office is an important step in ensuring that all Fijians have equal access to higher education regardless of their geographic location, an initiative aimed at enabling everyone to contribute to the global knowledge economy. It reflects the government's increasing recognition of the crucial role that quality education plays in promoting local empowerment and national progress. Speaking at the opening ceremony Prime Minister Rabuka emphasised that the establishment of the HEC office is a critical move. "We are breaking down barriers to education particularly those related to distance and access," stated the Prime Minister. The newly established office was strategically designed to cater specifically to the needs of the Northern Division, an area that has historically struggled with issues surrounding educational infrastructure and access. Prime Minister Rabuka stressed the critical importance of tackling



these disparities, highlighting that the Coalition Government's unwavering commitment to providing quality education forms a fundamental pillar of its National Development Plan for the period 2025-2029, as well as its long-term vision for 2050. "These forward-thinking initiatives are aimed at fostering the development of a more resilient and skilled workforce, empowering individuals to effectively navigate and address the challenges of the future."

"Education is the key to unlocking the potential of every individual," Prime Minister Rabuka said. "By investing in our people, particularly the youth of the Northern Division, we are paving the way for them to become innovative, lifelong learners and, ultimately, contributors to both local and national progress."

In Fiji, there are about 45 higher education institutions registered under the Fiji Higher Education Commission. There

are nine located in Vanua Levu, with one office in Savusavu, one in Taveuni, and seven in the Labasa area. Noting this the Prime Minister Rabuka said that the new HEC office will streamline coordination between these institutions, facilitating growth in educational offerings and attracting new opportunities to the division. "It is hoped that this development will create a robust education ecosystem system that benefit the entire Northern Division, boosting local economies and providing young people with the tool they need to succeed." "The establishment of this office is not just about having a physical presence. It is about breaking barriers, barriers of distance, barriers of access, and barriers of opportunities." Prime Minister Rabuka, in a key moment in his address, paid tribute to the late Dr Samuela Bogitini, a pioneering figure in the Northern Division's educational landscape. Dr Bogitini whose work was instrumental in the establishment of the University of the South Pacific's (USP) Labasa campus, is remembered for his passion for education and his dedication to fostering higher learning in the division. Prime Minister Rabuka called Dr Bogitini an inspiration and urged the northern communities to continue his legacy by supporting educational initiatives and

ensuring that young people have the resources to succeed. The Prime Minister nonetheless also addressed a significant challenge – the migration of skilled professionals. "A major challenge we currently face is the increasing exodus of our skilled professionals. It is a reality that impacts not only our workforce, but also the very fabric of our communities and society. This trend underscores the importance of making our education system resilient, adaptable, and forward-looking." "By nurturing talent here in the Northern Division, and ensuring that our young people see a future for themselves, not only within Fiji, but also within the region and further abroad, we can begin to address, even reverse, this trend of outward education and employment migration." The Prime Minister further urged the people of the Northern Division to embrace education as an essential tool for personal and collective empowerment. "This office is more than just a building; it is a resource, a platform where aspirations can be realised." "Your Government is deeply committed to education as the foundation of Fiji's prosperity, and I call on every individual, family and community to recognise and prioritise education as the key to unlocking your potential," concluded the Prime Minister.



Fiji News

FICAC Commissioner, Chief Justice Temo, PM and AG remain quiet in relation to more allegations against Malimali

FICAC Commissioner Barbara Malimali, Chair of the Judicial Services Commission Chief Justice Salesi Temo, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka and Attorney General Graham Leung have remained quiet as more allegations have surfaced against Malimali. Acting Police Commissioner, Juki Fong Chew confirms that two complaints have been lodged against Malimali, and the CID are looking into it. It was revealed earlier this week that a FICAC employee, who is a witness in the Commission of Inquiry regarding the appointment of the FICAC Commissioner, was sacked last Friday.

The former FICAC employee, Kuliniyasi Saumi who has filed a Police complaint of intimidation of a witness, claims he was unlawfully terminated by FICAC Commissioner, Barbara Malimali. Another complaint deals with the alleged payment to the defence counsel for the Commission of Inquiry. Chew says the matter is with the CID Team. We have sought comments from Malimali on these matters however the Commission will not comment at this stage. Chief Justice Temo, Rabuka and Leung have also not made any comments.



AG says he did not try to stop the work of the Commission of Inquiry

Attorney General, Graham Leung says the allegation made against him by the Fiji Labour Party and others that he tried to stop the work of the Commission of Inquiry, is false. Leung says he was summoned and appeared as a witness before the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the President to inquire into the appointment of the FICAC Commissioner on 16th January this year. The Attorney General says he acknowledges and respects the independence of the Commission and he is committed to supporting its mandate consistent with its Terms of Reference.



Stay alert as Flood and Heavy Rain warnings remain for Fiji

A flood warning is in force for flood-prone areas adjacent to and downstream of Ba River while a heavy rain warning remains in force for the Fiji Group. A flood alert remains in force for flood-prone areas adjacent to and downstream of Nadi, Sabeto and Nawaka rivers. A flash flood warning remains in force for all low-lying, flash flood-prone areas and small streams of Vanua Levu and parts of Viti Levu, including the greater Suva-Nausori area, Naitasiri Province, Tailvu through Rakiraki, Tavua, Ba, Lautoka and Nadi. A flash

flood alert remains in force for all low-lying, flash flood-prone areas and small streams for the rest of Fiji. The Met Office says a trough of low pressure remains slow-moving over Fiji with an embedded shallow low-pressure system located just west of Kadavu. They say the associated cloud and rain will continue to affect the country until Monday. Meanwhile, floodwaters have started receding in Ba Town after heavy rain this morning caused parts of the town to be flooded. The Ba Town Council says bus services are operating as normal, but the Ba Market

remains closed until tomorrow. They add that the shops in the town were not affected.





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Health News

RFK Jr, Dr Oz and weight-loss drugs: A high-price health clash may be looming

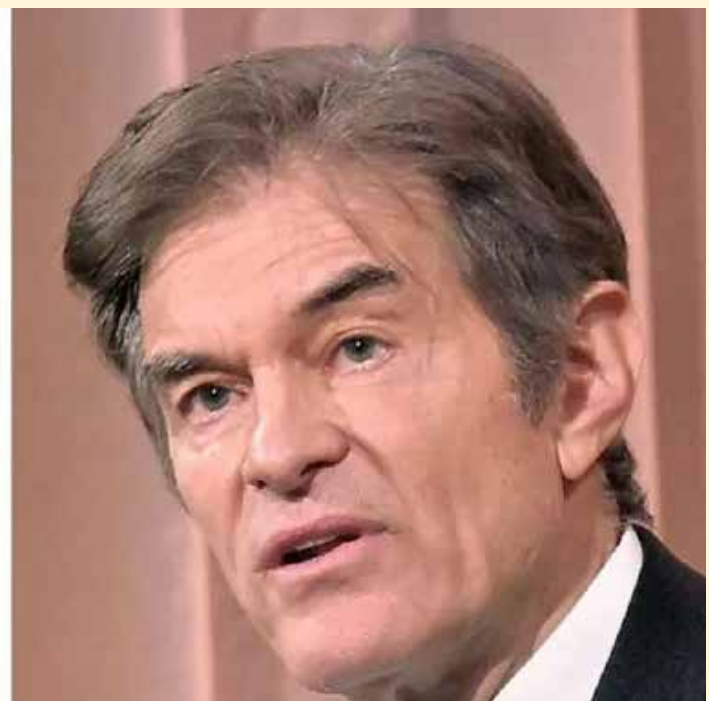
Trump's nominees for top health jobs agree that Americans need to lose weight, but they disagree on whether they should provide drugs such as Ozempic and Wegovy to achieve that aim - especially when those medicines are quite so expensive. As a weight management doctor, Mollie Cecil has seen first-hand how the latest weight-loss drugs help her patients. She knows from personal experience, too. After a year on one medication, the West Virginia doctor lost 40 pounds. Her cholesterol and arthritis improved, allowing her to be more active with her young children. "I just felt like a new person on them," she said. But she worried about the same obstacle facing many of her patients - losing insurance coverage - so she tapered off the drugs as a precaution. It turned out she was right. Dr Cecil later learned her new non-profit insurance plan could not afford to cover the cost of the drugs. She gradually gained back most of the weight she lost. A new weight-loss drug policy? The latest class of weight-loss drugs - also known as GLP-1 agonists - are "the most potent weight-loss medications we have ever had", Dr Cecil said. "But when I can't get them to [my patients], as a physician who really cares about taking care of people ... it just feels helpless," she said. The new class of drugs - often not covered by private insurance - can cost \$1,000 (£809) a month on average. Federal law bans Medicare from covering the drugs when used for weight loss, though they usually are covered when used to treat diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Only 13 states provide coverage under Medicaid for weight loss purposes. To make them more accessible, then-President Joe Biden recently proposed that Medicare and Medicaid cover them, but now that will be up to President Donald Trump's new administration. Its weight-loss drug policy would fall to Trump's pick for health secretary, Robert F Kennedy Jr, and Mehmet Oz, Trump's choice to lead Medicare and Medicaid services. But this could mean a poten-

tial clash: Kennedy is a vocal critic of the weight-loss drugs while Oz is an ardent advocate. The Trump administration did not respond to a request for comment about how it would handle the Biden administration's proposal for Medicare - federal insurance for those 65 and older - and Medicaid - government insurance for low-income people - to cover the drugs. Trump's future approach remains unclear, with several people in his inner circle holding contradictory views, said Jonathan Zhang, a professor at Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy. "GLP-1, Ozempic, this is a drug that has so much patient demand," Mr Zhang said. "It's really taken on a life of its own on social media. So the Trump administration - or any administration - faces a tonne of pressure to do something about this in the near term." A weight-loss drug sceptic vs a television promoter During his presidential run last year, Kennedy made tackling the obesity epidemic a central part of his platform. Over 100 million people in the US are obese, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. After dropping out and endorsing Trump, Kennedy launched his "Make America Healthy Again" initiative to reduce obesity by eliminating ultra-processed foods and additives, among other more controversial ideas. But the 71-year-old has been outspoken

about weight-loss drugs, telling Fox News in October: "They're counting on selling [weight-loss medications] to Americans because we're so stupid and so addicted to drugs." "If we just gave good food, three meals a day, to every man, woman and child in our country, we could solve the obesity and diabetes epidemic overnight," Kennedy added. Shortly after Trump chose Kennedy to lead the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), he announced that he selected Oz, a former TV show host and surgeon, to lead the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), an agency within HHS that administers the government health insurance. As a television show host, Oz spent years promoting various weight-loss drugs, including more recently, GLP-1 drugs. "For those who want to lose a few pounds, Ozempic and other semaglutide medications can be a big help," Oz posted on Instagram in 2023. "We need to make it as easy as possible for people to meet their health goals, period." Another popular drug, Wegovy, also comes under the semaglutide category to which Oz was referring. Decisions about Medicare and Medicaid drug coverage would likely involve leaders from both HHS and CMS, experts said. Spokespeople for Oz and Kennedy did not respond to requests for comment about how they would handle the policy decision. Neither has

been confirmed to their appointments yet. An 'enormous' cost The high price of GLP-1 drugs - which are patented, meaning cheaper copycat versions can't be made - has led to a debate among insurance companies, said Benjamin Rome, a health policy researcher at Harvard Medical School. The companies have to decide whether to raise insurance premiums, in general, to cover the costs, or to forgo coverage of GLP-1s altogether, he said. Many have decided not to cover them. Others cut off coverage to patients once they lose weight and reach a body mass index (BMI) below the obesity range of 30 or higher, Dr Cecil said. When Dr Cecil was on a GLP-1 using her previous insurance, she said she wouldn't allow herself to lose as much weight as she wanted to avoid crossing the BMI threshold. "They'll cut off coverage, saying, 'Well, you don't need it anymore. You've lost weight.' But of course, the reason they lost weight is because of the medicine," she said. Getting off anti-obesity drugs too quickly also can cause unpleasant withdrawal effects, and many gain back the weight. Government insurance faces a similar cost predicament when it comes to covering the new weight-loss medications. "Although there's obviously a lot of interest in doing so to make these highly effective drugs more available to patients who need them, the cost of doing so would be enormous

because so many people are eligible and because the prices are so high," Dr Rome said. When Biden officials issued the rule requiring Medicare and Medicaid to cover the anti-obesity medications, they did so after the election, knowing it would not be up to them to carry the policy out, said Mark Fendrick, the director of the University of Michigan Center for Value-Based Insurance Design. The federal government said last year that it could cost about \$25b for Medicare and \$11b for Medicaid to provide the drugs over the next 10 years. "How do we pay for that?" Dr Fendrick asked. The Biden-era rule must go through a public comment period before the Trump administration ultimately decides whether to move forward with it, experts said. Dr Cecil said the government and private insurance companies may remain hesitant to foot the bill for such expensive medications. But she believes the savings that would come from tackling obesity for millions of Americans would greatly outweigh the short-term costs. "Five to ten years is when we would really see a huge payoff, because that's when we would really start to see trending downwards for some of these more serious long term complications," Dr Cecil said. "If everyone who needed the drugs could afford them and wanted to take them, it would be pretty game changing."



Health News

Farm worker contracts human case of bird flu

A person working on a farm has contracted the human version of avian flu. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said the individual in the West Midlands region "had close and prolonged contact with a large number of infected birds", but would not say where the farm was. The person was "currently well and was admitted to a High Consequence Infectious Disease unit," it said. It also said the risk to the wider public "continues to be very low" and that bird-to-human transmission of this kind was rare. UKHSA routinely swabs people who have been in close contact with infected birds and, after confirming the transmission, said there was no evidence that the person had passed it on to anyone else. Nevertheless, it said it had traced everyone the person had been in contact with and offered them antiviral treatment. UK Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss said: "While avian influenza is highly contagious in birds, this is a very rare event and is very specific to the circumstances on this premises." She also said the farm had been thoroughly cleaned and that it was "a reminder that stringent biosecurity is essential when keeping animals". Since 2021 there have



only been seven cases of humans contracting bird flu, and there has never been an instance of bird flu being passed from human to human in Europe or the UK. Andrew Gwynne, Minister for Public Health and Prevention, said the government had recently added the H5 vaccine, which protects against avian influenza, to its stockpile of vaccines as a precaution. County in bird flu lockdown The announcement came soon after the

decision to place the whole of Shropshire into an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ), following an outbreak of bird flu at a farm in the county. This means anyone who has birds in Shropshire must house their animals. This applies whether or not you have just one or two chickens in a back garden right up to large commercial flocks. Alongside this move, the rest of England has also seen new bird flu measures put in place,

though these are not as strong as those in Shropshire. It means everyone with birds must now follow enhanced biosecurity measures. Including; Cleansing and disinfecting footwear and clothing. Disinfecting housing on a continuous basis. Minimising contact with wild birds. Keeping birds away from ponds and lakes. At the site of the Shropshire outbreak, the killing and disposal of a million egg-laying birds at a farm

just outside Wem continues. In a statement, the Griffiths family, who run the farm, told the BBC the outbreak was "devastating news". Overall levels of bird flu have not reached the peak of recent years, but anyone with birds is asked to remain vigilant. There is no risk to the public from eating poultry or eggs, but if more commercial egg-laying flocks are impacted, it could affect the price of eggs in the shops.

New Virus Outbreak In China: What Is HMPV? Know Symptoms, Prevention Tips And More

Five years after the Covid-19 pandemic China is witnessing an outbreak of the human metapneumovirus (HMPV). According to reports and social media posts, hospitals are overcrowded with infected individuals and crematories are overwhelmed. Some social media users claim that multiple viruses, including influenza A, HMPV, Mycoplasma pneumoniae and Covid-19, are circulating in China. There are even claims that China has declared a state of emergency, however, there's no official confirmation. HMPV causes flu-like symptoms. The virus usually affects the upper respiratory system but can sometimes cause lower respiratory infections. HMPV is more common in winter and early spring. Symptoms of the hu-

man metapneumovirus HMPV symptoms are similar to those of flu or common cold. It can spread from an infected individual to others through coughing, sneezing or personal contact. Some common symptoms include: Cough Fever Nasal congestion Sore throat Shortness of breath The estimated incubation period is three to six days and the duration depends on the severity of the infection. Who is at a higher risk? Young children, older adults and those with weakened immune systems are at a higher risk of developing severe illness due to HMPV. What are the complications of HMPV? Sometimes HMPV can cause severe illness that might require hospitalisation. Bronchiolitis, Bronchitis, Pneumonia, Asthma or COPD flare-ups and

Ear infection (otitis media) are a few complications. Prevention tips: You can reduce the risk of getting HMPV and other respiratory illnesses with these steps: Wash hands with soap and

water for atleast 20 seconds to control the spread Cover your mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing Consider wearing a mask and avoid contact with those who are sick Avoid touch-

ing your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands Practice self-isolation if you are sick Currently, there is no specific antiviral therapy or vaccine to prevent HMPV.



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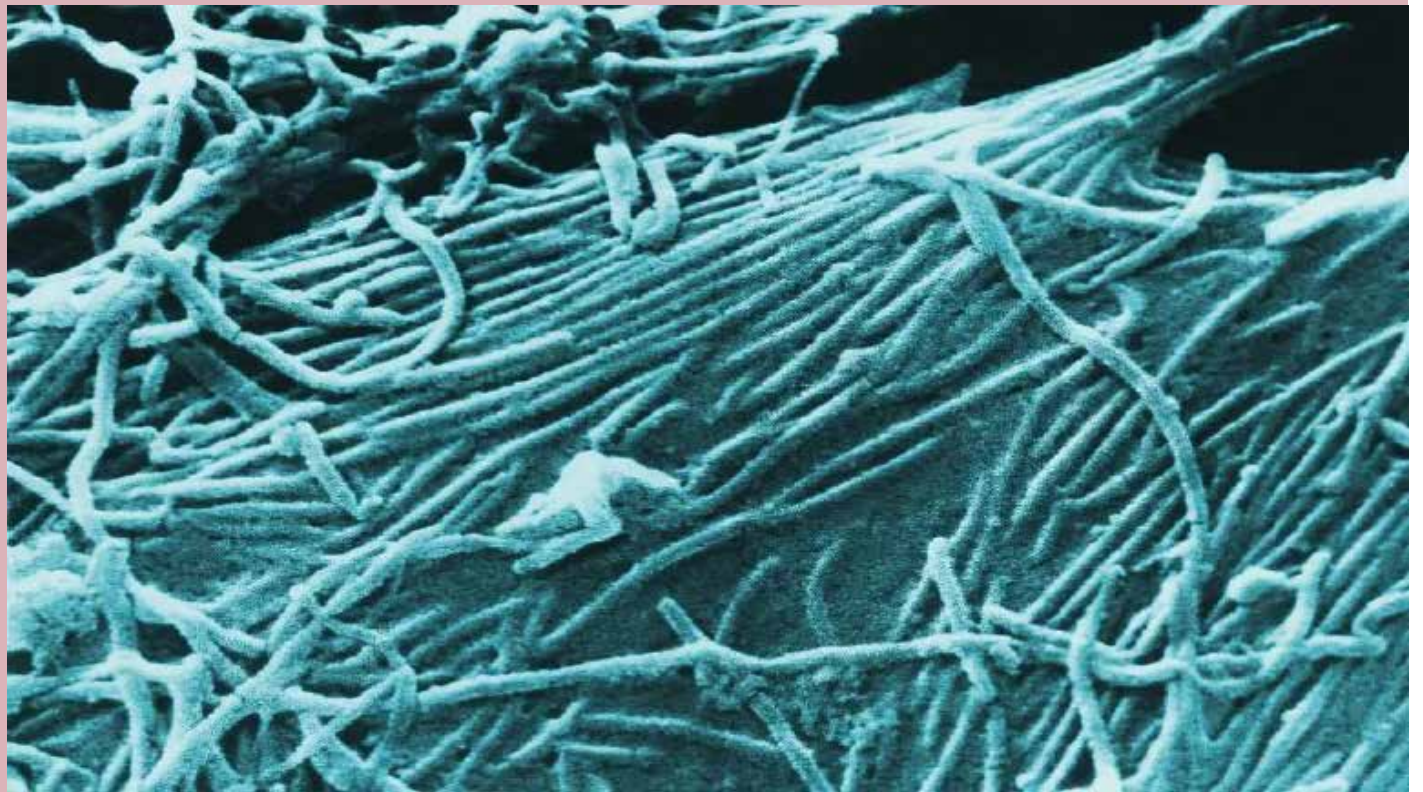
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Health News

Nurse dies as Uganda confirms new Ebola outbreak

Uganda's ministry of health has confirmed a new outbreak of the Ebola virus in the capital, Kampala, with one reported death. The victim was a 32-year-old male nurse whose symptoms included "high fever, chest pain, and difficulty in breathing" and "bleeding from multiple body sites". He died of multi-organ failure on Wednesday at Mulango National Hospital, located in the city's central business district. This marks Uganda's eighth recorded Ebola outbreak since the first infection was documented in 2000. The Sudan Ebola Virus Disease (SUDV) is a highly infectious haemorrhagic fever which is transmitted through contact with infected bodily fluids and tissues. It is one of several strains of the Ebola virus known to cause outbreaks. In the days before his death, the nurse went to multiple health facilities as well as a traditional healer, before the diagnosis was confirmed. He also went to a public hospital in Mbale, a city which borders Kenya. The ministry said 44 contacts of the deceased man, including 30 healthcare workers, have been identified for



tracing. Rapid response teams have been deployed to try to contain the disease. But contact tracing may be difficult since Kampala, a bustling city of over four million people, serves as a major hub for travel to South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and other neighbouring countries. Ugan-

da's last Ebola outbreak was in September 2022, which was also caused by SUDV. Centred in Mubende district, it was declared over after four months. There are six known types of the Ebola virus. Four of them, Zaire, Bundibugyo, Sudan, and Taï Forest, are known to cause disease in humans. The Reston

and Bombali strains primarily affect non-human primates. Unlike the more common Zaire Ebola virus, there is no approved vaccine for the Sudan strain. Symptoms of Ebola infection include fever, fatigue, muscle pain, headache, and sore throat, followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, and internal and

external bleeding. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that, on average, Ebola kills five in every 10 infected individuals. However, past outbreaks have shown a case fatality rate ranging from 25% to 90%, depending on the circumstances and response measures.

Bowel cancer prediction test for IBD patients 90% accurate

A new method for detecting bowel cancer is more than 90% accurate at predicting which higher-risk people will develop the disease, according to research. About 500,000 people in the UK live with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), including Crohn's and ulcerative colitis. Currently, they are offered regular checks for pre-cancerous growths in their gut, which, if detected, indicate about a 30% chance of bowel cancer developing over 10 years. But the UK research found DNA changes in those pre-cancerous cells, when analysed by an algorithm, were more than 90% accurate in predicting who would develop bowel cancer over the next five years. The researchers used tissue samples from IBD patients - but it is hoped their method can be used to develop a simple blood test to identify those IBD patients most at risk. "Research like this will save lives," Craig Foster, from Waterlooville, Hants, whose wife, Fariba, died of bowel cancer in February 2024, said. Fariba had lived with

ulcerative colitis since she was 18, when three-quarters of her bowel were removed. "It gives me comfort to know that there are scientists working right now so that no-one has to experience the same situation Fariba was in," Craig said. "Fariba died just six months after she was diagnosed. "Even though it was a short time, it was the worst time. "Cancer takes no prisoners - and it doesn't matter who you are or from what walk of life, everyone is affected in some way," Prof Trevor Graham, from the Institute of Cancer Research in London, said: "Most people with ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease won't develop bowel cancer.

"But for those that have these conditions and are showing signs of pre-cancer in their colon, there are some tough decisions to make. "Either they have it monitored regularly, in the hope that it doesn't become cancer, or they have their bowel removed to guarantee they don't get cancer in the future. "Neither of these options are particularly

pleasant. "Our test and algorithm give people with IBD, and the doctors who care for them, the best possible information so that they can make the right decision about how to manage their cancer risk." 'Hugely exciting' Marianne Radcliffe, of the charity Crohn's & Colitis UK, said this was really positive news for those living with the conditions. "People tell us that one of the hardest things about living with Crohn's or colitis is the uncertainty - in everyday life and in the long

term. "Just as with inflammatory bowel disease, we know the earlier you find out about cancer, the better. "Anything that enables early detection with quicker, less invasive diagnostic tests, removing some of that uncertainty, is hugely exciting." 'Focus resources' Dr Iain Foulkes, of Cancer Research UK, which funded the research, says advances in technology are reshaping understanding of diseases such as cancer. "Genome sequencing is now far cheaper and more widespread than ever

before - and it's changing how we look at cancer," he said. "Getting a full readout of tumour DNA means we can see a much bigger picture of how someone's cancer started and how it is likely to change over time. "With this research, we can focus resources on treating people with IBD who are at really high risk, saving health services valuable time and money. "We can also give those at lower risk peace of mind and remove the fear of bowel cancer in the future."



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Health News

How the 6-6-6 Walking Workout Can Help You Lose Weight and Get Fit

If you liked the 12-3-30 treadmill challenge and the 90-30-50 diet, then you might also want to try the 6-6-6 walking trend. Experts, like Dr. Milica McDowell, a Certified Exercise Physiologist and Vice President of Operations at Gait Happens, say walking is the most effective form of preventive physical activity you can do. “Walking more than 3,500 steps per day has been repeatedly shown to help reduce cardiovascular and all-cause death risks. It’s low cost and assessable to most,” she said, adding that it’s an “amazing” way to take control of your health. But, what is the 6-6-6 walking workout and what benefits can it especially provide? What the 6-6-6 walking workout involves Mike Julom, an ACE-certified personal trainer, CrossFit athlete, and founder of ThisIsWhyImFit, explained that the 6-6-6 walking workout involves walking for 60 minutes, either at 6 a.m. or 6 p.m. It additionally includes a 6-minute warm-up at a slow pace to help you ease into walk-

ing and a 6-minute cool-down to aid in recovery. “The bulk of the exercise is at a faster, brisk pace to raise the heart rate and challenge the cardio system,” noted Julom. “It’s designed to be short and simple, especially for people who want to fit exercise into a busy day.” According to McDowell, this makes the 6-6-6 program a way to get more than the 150 minutes of exercise per week recommended by both the American College of Sports Medicine and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Trusted Source. “By doing it early (6 a.m.) or late (6 p.m.), it helps walkers find the time to squeeze the walk in before their day or schedule gets crazy,” she said. How the 6-6-6 walking workout can benefit your health As McDowell noted, walking in general, whether it follows the 6-6-6 format or not, is a great form of exercise. “If you walk in Zone 2 of your heart rate range, you can reap numerous health benefits,” said McDowell. “Zone 2 is about 50% of HR Max for most people (estimate

HR max by taking 220-(your age)).” Per McDowell, walking in this zone helps you burn more fat for fuel, which can aid in weight loss. Also, because walking has less impact on joints and tissues than running or sports like pickleball, McDowell said it can be safe for many people to try. Julom agreed, saying that walking is great exercise, especially for older adults or those with joint pain or limited mobility. He further noted that regular walking has been shown to reduce mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. Additionally, according to Julom, it may improve gut and bone health and reduce people’s risks for cardiovascular disease and death. The American Heart Association Trusted Source (AHA) adds that walking 150 minutes per week can provide such benefits as: Better sleep Improved cognition Reduced risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain cancers Lowered blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol Increased energy and stamina

Reduced risk for depression Better memory Lowered risk of dementia Stronger bones Less weight gain How to get started with a new walking workout To get started with a walking program, the American Heart Association Trusted Source (AHA) suggests choosing comfortable clothing and shoes with good support. Those designed for walking or running work best but aren’t mandatory. They additionally advise leaving about a half-inch of space between your longest toe and the end of your shoe and avoiding cotton socks to prevent blisters. They further suggest starting slow and building up rather than attempting to do the full distance on your first day. Even as little as 10-15 minutes is enough in the beginning. When you’re walking, the AHA says you should walk naturally and walk at a pace where you can breathe comfortably. After you warm up, you can try walking at a faster rate. You can also try alternating between faster and slower intervals, gradually increasing the amount of time

spent walking faster. Walking uphill can help you build muscle and burn more calories. Additionally, the AHA states that stretching should be done at the end of your workout since your body will be fully warmed up at this point. Finally, they advise tracking your progress and squeezing walking into your schedule wherever you can, even if that means taking multiple short walks each day. For many, the 6-6-6 workout’s requirement to walk either in the morning or evening could help them achieve this goal. Takeaway The 6-6-6 walking workout trend advises people to walk for 60 minutes a day, either at 6 a.m. or 6 p.m., with a 6-minute warm-up and 6-minute cool-down. The benefits of walking are numerous, including reduced risk for chronic diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular disease. To get started with a walking program, wear comfortable clothing and supportive shoes, begin slowly, and make sure you warm up before stretching.





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Health News

Scientists trial patch to mend failing hearts



Damaged hearts could be mended using small "patches" of heart muscle grown in the lab, say scientists writing in *Nature*. The technology could give new hope to millions of people with advanced heart failure whose treatment options are currently limited, the German researchers say. Based on early results of a small trial in humans and promising tests in monkeys, the patches appear to support the pumping of the heart safely. However, the long-term poten-

tial of the treatment is as yet unknown, with a clinical trial in 15 patients still ongoing. The patches are grown from another person's stem cells - special cells which can be turned into any number of different cell types - and made into heart muscle cells. The lab-grown cardiac tissue can then be grafted on to beating hearts to help them repair. It is like "implanting young muscle", says study author Ingo Kutschka, from University Medical Center Goettingen. A small

incision is made in the chest and the 3.5in (9cm) by 1.5in patch is stitched on to the surface of the heart. "It's tricky because the tissues are floppy, and you have to take care to make it stay in shape," he says. There have been encouraging results in trials of the patches on primates and on one human patient. The 46-year-old woman had a heart attack in 2016, then developed heart failure which got steadily worse. In 2021, after all possible treatments had been tried, she

chose to have a heart patch. The researchers say her condition was stable and she experienced no side effects from the implant, before having a heart transplant three months later. The patch was able to "adapt, grow, mature and start to support the failing heart," says lead author Prof Wolfram-Hubertus Zimmermann. Her case shows that new muscle can be added to failing hearts "without safety concerns, such as tumours and arrhythmia [irregular heart rhythms]", he added. The patches of engineered heart muscle have to survive in the patient and be nurtured over several months, so are not useful for people who need emergency care, the researchers say. In trials on monkeys, the research team found the patches were good at contracting, enhancing and thickening the heart wall, which improved the pumping of the whole heart. Heart failure is the leading cause of death worldwide, but there are few effective ways of fixing the organ once it is broken. It is a condition that makes even simple daily tasks, like climbing the stairs or getting dressed, exhausting. Heart devices can be costly and come with complications, and a heart transplant - although the best

solution - is rarely an option. Prof Zimmermann says: "99% of patients with heart failure won't receive a new heart." The researchers have more to learn from the current human trial and plan a long-term follow-up of 15 patients to find out more about the health of those living with the patches for years. Prof James Leiper, director of research at the British Heart Foundation charity, said the early results were "promising", but trials in a larger number of patients were needed "to determine the effectiveness of the heart patch in humans". "If these are positive, it could help to usher in a new era of heart failure treatment," he said. Previous attempts to inject heart muscle cells into people's failing hearts have had mixed results. "Off the shelf" heart patches like the ones used in this study - made from millions of human stem cells and grown into working heart muscle - are seen to be a less dangerous option, although patients would need to take strong drugs to prevent their bodies rejecting them. Using the patient's own stem cells to develop heart tissue has been attempted, but this process takes a very long time and previous trials using these grafts were not encouraging.



World News

Coldplay Breaks Taylor Swift's Record Of Most-Attended Concert Tour

Coldplay attendance numbers were massively inflated after the band performed in India earlier this month in front of packed stadiums. Coldplay has broken the record for the highest attendance in a single tour, surpassing Taylor Swift's Eras Tour. The British rock band has sold over 10.3 million tickets as part of its Music of the Spheres World Tour which commenced in March 2022 with a show in Costa Rica. With over eight months remaining on the tour, the band could further smash the records, the Guinness World Records said on Thursday (Jan 30). Coldplay attendance numbers were massively inflated after the band performed in India earlier this month. The band kickstarted their India leg with three concerts at DY Patil Sports Stadium in Navi Mumbai on January 18, 19 and 21. The second leg of the tour included two shows on January 25 and 26 at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad with over 1,30,000 concertgoers attending the event on each night. "Thank

you Ahmedabad, thank you India. We'll never forget these two weeks.

Your love and kindness will stay with us forever," said Coldplay after the culmination of the India tour. Such was the magnitude of Coldplay's impact that even Prime Minister Narendra

Modi mentioned the band in his speech while reflecting on the growing craze of live events in India. "In the past decade, both the trend and demand for live events have grown. In the last few days, you must have seen the magnificent images from the Coldplay concerts held in

Mumbai and Ahmedabad. It is a testimony of the scope of live concerts in India," said PM Modi. After the hugely successful shows in India, Coldplay's next concert is scheduled to take place in April in Hong Kong, followed by Seoul before heading to the United States. While

Ms Swift may have fallen behind in the number of people attending her concert, Eras Tour remains the highest-grossing music tour at \$2.07 billion. However, as per Guinness, there is a good possibility that Coldplay might overtake this record as well.



This New Zealand Mountain Granted Legal Rights Similar To A Human

New Zealand's Mount Taranaki, now known as Taranaki Maunga, has been granted the same legal rights as a person. In a landmark decision, New Zealand has granted Mount Taranaki, now officially known as Taranaki Maunga, the same legal rights as a human being, according to BBC. This recognition makes Taranaki Maunga the third natural feature in the country to be accorded individual status, after the Whanganui River and Te Urewera National Park. Indigenous people view Mount Taranaki-now known by its Maori name, Taranaki Maunga-as an ancestral entity. According to BBC, it means Taranaki Maunga [Mt Taranaki] will effectively own itself, with representatives of the local tribes, iwi, and government working together to manage it. The agreement aims to compensate Maori from the Taranaki region for injustices done to them

during colonisation - including widespread land confiscation. "We must acknowledge the hurt that has been caused by past wrongs, so we can look to the future to support iwi to realise their own aspirations and opportunities," Paul Goldsmith,

the government minister responsible for the negotiations, said. According to The Metro, the pristine, snow-capped dormant volcano is the second highest on New Zealand's North Island at 8,261ft and a popular spot for tourism, hiking and snow

sports. It comes alongside a move to rename the mountain from Mt Egerton to its original Maori name of Te Papa-Kura-o-Taranaki (meaning the highly regarded and treasured lands of Taranaki), with the highest peak named Taranaki Maunga.

The newly-passed law gives Taranaki Maunga all the rights, powers, duties, responsibilities and liabilities of a person. Its legal personality has a name: Te Kahui Tupua, which the law views as 'a living and indivisible whole'.



Tech News

SoftBank to lead \$500Mn investment in AI robotics startup 'Skild AI': Report

SoftBank, which has been committing billions in US investments around data centres and AI, is now aggressively pushing into another related and trending sector – robotics. SoftBank Group Corp. is reportedly in advanced talks to invest a significant amount in Pittsburgh-headquartered Skild AI. According to a report by Bloomberg, the Japanese investment powerhouse may lead a \$500Mn fundraise for the AI robotics startup. The report further suggests Skild AI touching a \$4Bn valuation in this fundraise. This development becomes even more significant considering the company was founded just two years ago, in 2023. However, there has been no official comment from SoftBank or Skild AI regarding the development. Skild AI is known for building a general-purpose AI model for robots that is robust and adapts to unseen scenarios without failure. The company is primarily developing software that enables robots to perform increasingly complex tasks and adapt to new

tasks without needing pre-programmed instructions. The company claims to be developing an intelligent embodied system that will completely transform productivity and elevate human potential. Skild AI was founded by Deepak Pathak and Abhinav Gupta, professors at Carnegie Mellon University. Both are well-versed in the AI industry, having previously worked as AI researchers at Meta Platforms. SoftBank is already an investor in Skild AI. In July 2024, the startup raised approximately \$300 million from Lightspeed Venture Partners, SoftBank Group, Jeff Bezos, and others. At that time, the company was valued at \$1.5 billion. Skild AI counts Amazon, Menlo Ventures, Felicis, CRV, General Catalyst, and Sequoia Capital among its investors as well. This development comes at a time when SoftBank is heavily investing in the artificial intelligence domain. Just a few days ago, the investment firm announced the Stargate Project, in collaboration with OpenAI,



Oracle, Microsoft, and Nvidia. This joint venture intends to allocate \$500 billion over the next 4 years to strengthen AI infrastructure in the United States, starting with \$100 billion in the first year. SoftBank and OpenAI are each reportedly planning to contribute \$19 billion in capital to Stargate in the initial year. Robotics seems to be gaining

popularity with AI once again. In fact, the maker of ChatGPT is reportedly considering entering the sector once more, this time with the development of a full-fledged humanoid robot. Samsung is also not behind in the race, as last month the electronics giant announced it would become the largest shareholder in Rainbow Robotics, the com-

pany whose founders claim to have developed South Korea's first two-legged walking robot, 'Hubo.' In the meantime, the world's largest AI chipmaker, NVIDIA, is also planning to launch a new generation of compact 'Jetson Thor' computers for humanoid robots. The global robotics market size is expected to reach over \$200 billion by 2030.

DeepSeek's AI models trigger historic US tech stock sell-off

The AI sector grew by leaps and bounds in recent years, fueled by advancements in AI tech, the demand for popular chatbots like ChatGPT and Gemini, and the millions that have been invested in the sector by investors across the globe. Now, the exact opposite has happened – China-origin DeepSeek's foray into AI has resulted in a massive upheaval in the global tech sector – the company's low-cost, high-performance AI models have now challenged established players in the sector and triggered an unprecedented sell-off in tech stocks, wiping out billions of dollars in market value. DeepSeek, the two-year-old Hangzhou-based startup, recently released its DeepSeek-V3 and DeepSeek-R1 models. These AI platforms, according to the company, rival the capabilities of leading Western competitors like OpenAI's ChatGPT but operate at a fraction of the cost. What makes these developments all the more enticing is that DeepSeek's AI models were

reportedly developed on Nvidia's less powerful H800 chips at a cost of under \$6 million—significantly less than what competitors typically spend. In other words, you can have fast, efficient performance at a fraction of the cost. The DeepSeek-R1 model, introduced just a week ago, is said to be 20 to 50 times more cost-efficient than similar offerings from industry giants. Independent third-party evaluations have corroborated the company's claims, confirming that DeepSeek's models outperform in several key areas. Moreover, the decision to make these models open-source means that developers worldwide have access to, and can deploy, these tools without substantial investment on their part. DeepSeek's gain has proved to be the detriment of other tech companies, though. Nvidia, a dominant force in AI hardware, saw its stock plunge by nearly 17%, translating to a loss of \$593 billion in market capitalization. This marked the largest single-day loss in the history

of Wall Street, surpassing even its previous record of \$279 billion in September. "DeepSeek demonstrates an alternative path to efficient model training than the current arm's race among hyperscalers by significantly increasing the data quality and improving the model architecture. DeepSeek is now the lowest cost of LLM manufacturing, allowing frontier AI performance at a fraction of the cost with 9-13x lower price on output tokens vs. GPT-4o and Claude 3.5," Morgan Stanley commented on the development. Other semiconductor companies were similarly affected. Broadcom's shares fell by 17.4%, while Marvell Technology suffered a 19.1% decline. The Philadelphia Semiconductor Index, a key benchmark for the sector, dropped by 9.2%, its steepest decline since the onset of the pandemic back in 2020. According to analysts, this widespread fall can be attributed to fears that the demand for high-performance AI chips could be significantly reduced by the rise of more efficient

alternatives like DeepSeek's models. The Nasdaq Composite Index, heavily populated with tech and AI-focused firms, fell by 3.1%, marking one of its most significant single-day declines in recent years. At its lowest point during the trading session, the index had lost more than \$1 trillion in valuation. Similarly, major Big Tech companies like Microsoft and Alphabet, which have invested

heavily in proprietary AI technologies, also experienced notable declines. Microsoft, a key backer of OpenAI, saw its shares drop by 2.1%, while Alphabet, Google's parent company, fell by 4.2%. Outside the U.S., global markets mirrored this downturn. Japan's SoftBank Group closed 8.3% lower, and European semiconductor firms like ASML reported losses of over 7%.



World News

US Congress Bans Employees From Installing DeepSeek On Phones, Computers

Congressional offices have been issued a warning against utilising DeepSeek, a Chinese chatbot that's been making waves in the American AI market. Congressional offices have been issued a warning against utilising DeepSeek, a Chinese chatbot that's been making waves in the American AI market. The rapid evolution of AI technology has posed significant security and administrative challenges for Congress, prompting the House's Chief Administrative Officer to take proactive measures. In a notice obtained by Axios, the Chief Administrative Officer stated that DeepSeek is currently under review and unauthorised for official House use. The notice highlighted the risks associated with DeepSeek, citing instances where "threat actors are already exploiting" the chatbot to deliver malicious software and infect devices. To mitigate these risks, the House has implemented security measures to restrict DeepSeek's function-

ality on all House-issued devices. Staffers are explicitly prohibited from installing DeepSeek on official phones, computers, and tablets. This isn't the first time the Chief Administrative

Officer has restricted the use of an AI product. In 2023, the office imposed limits on the use of ChatGPT, allowing only the paid version for specific tasks. Similarly, last April, staffers

were barred from using Microsoft Copilot, although the company is reportedly working on government-oriented tools that may be approved in the future. The move to restrict DeepSeek's

use underscores the ongoing challenges Congress faces in navigating the complexities of AI technology while ensuring the security and integrity of its systems.



Japan Scrambles Fighter Jets As Russian Bombers Fly Over High Seas

Tokyo has raised the issue with Moscow in the past through diplomatic routes, including regarding a Russian fighter jet's intrusion into territorial airspace in September, which Russia denied according to media reports. Japan scrambled fighter jets after Russian bombers flew over international waters around the country, Tokyo's top government spokesman said Friday. "We confirmed that Russian military bombers and fighter jets flew over the high seas of the Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan yesterday, and we scrambled Air Self-Defense Force fighter jets" in response, Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters.

"It is difficult to say clearly what the purpose of the flight was... but the Russian military has been active on an ongoing basis in areas surrounding Japan," he said. Tokyo has raised the issue with Moscow in the past through diplomatic routes, including regarding a Russian fighter jet's intrusion into territorial airspace in September,

which Russia denied according to media reports. "We will continue to monitor (the situation) closely and do our best to take measures in patrolling and responding to airspace in-

cursions," Hayashi said. Russia's defence ministry said on Telegram Thursday that two long-range bombers flew over international waters in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Ok-

hotsk. The Russian ministry also released a video of two Tupolev-95 aircraft escorted by Russian fighter jets conducting what it called a regular flight over more than eight hours. "All

flights by Russian Aerospace Forces aircraft are carried out in strict compliance with international rules on the use of airspace," it said in a statement.



Food

Oreo Cookie Cheesecake Recipe

Oreo Cookie Cheesecake

Total Time: 3hr 10min

Prep Time : 10 min

Cook Time : 3 hrs

Serves: 5 Servings

Ingredients

1. 25 oreo cookies
2. 4 Tbsp melted butter
3. 4 packets cream cheese
4. 4 Tbsp corn flour 1 cup sugar
5. 4 eggs
6. 2 tsp vanilla essence
7. 2 bars melted chocolate (240 gm)
8. 1/2 cup cream
9. 1/3 cup liquor of choice (optional)

How to

1. Crush about 20 cookies and mix in the melted butter. Line the base of the baking pan evenly with this

mixture.

2. Now beat cream cheese, sugar and cornflour together. Once it becomes creamy, mix in the eggs but do it one at a time.
3. Stir in the liquor and vanilla essence. Add melted chocolate and cream. Break the remaining cookies into smaller pieces and mix.
4. Pour the batter over the crust and bake it in the oven at 180 degrees C for about 10 minutes. Turn the heat down to 100 degrees C and bake for 2 hours.
5. When done leave the cake in the oven to cool for two hours and then refrigerate overnight.
6. Garnish with some mint leaves. Slice and serve.



Crumb-Fried Chicken Recipe

Crumb-Fried Chicken

Total Time: 35 min

Prep Time : 10 min

Cook Time : 25 min

Serves: 6 Servings

Ingredients

1. 1 chicken - cut into 6 pieces
2. 2 eggs
3. 1 Tbsp garlic paste
4. 1/4 cup refined flour
5. Dash of black pepper
6. 1 Tbsp salt or to taste
7. Powdered bread crumbs to coat the chicken
8. Oil for deep-frying

How to

1. Place the chicken, eggs, garlic paste, refined flour, black pepper and salt in a bowl and mix well. Leave thus for at least an hour.

2. Lift the pieces and coat with the breadcrumbs and keep aside.
3. Heat the oil till a piece of bread thrown in comes up at once.
4. Place as many chicken pieces as come in without touching each other.
5. Turn once and lower the heat and let fry to a golden and then turn once again till golden on both sides.
6. Drain on absorbent paper and serve.
7. Note: In case you want to serve later, fry them for a short while on both sides, not letting them brown, and fry again to a golden color before serving.



Baked Mushrooms and Capsicum Recipe

Baked Mushrooms and Capsicum

Total Time: 40 min

Prep Time : 10 min

Cook Time : 30 min

Serves: 2 Servings

Ingredients

1. Oven Temp: 325F-160C
2. 2 Tbsp butter
3. 1 cup onions, chopped fine
4. 1 large capsicum, de-seeded and sliced thin
5. 200 gm mushroom, sliced broad
6. 2 tsp salt
7. 1 tsp black pepper, freshly powdered

8. 3 cups cheese, grated
9. A few tomato slices for garnish

For the white sauce:

10. 2 cups milk
11. 1 cup maida
12. 2 Tbsp butter

How to

For the white sauce:

1. Mix all the ingredients together and keep stirring to avoid lumps.

Make the mushroom mixture:

1. Melt the butter add onions and capsicum and stir-fry till they look glossy.
2. Add the mushrooms and

continue to stir-fry over high heat till vegetables look like they are coated with the butter.

3. Take it off the heat and mix in the salt, pepper and white sauce.
4. Transfer mixture into a oven proof serving dish.
5. Sprinkle the cheese to cover the mixture, garnish with the tomato slices and bake in a pre-heated oven for half an hour, or till cheese is slightly brown.
6. Serve.



Food

Gluten Free Mushroom Pecan Sliders Recipe

Gluten Free Mushroom Pecan Sliders Recipe

Total Time: 23 min

Prep Time : 15 min

Cook Time : 8 min

Serves: 4 Servings

Ingredients

1. 25-30 button mushrooms, chopped
2. 10-15 American Pecans, finely chopped
3. 16 thick tomato slices
4. 2 tbsp oil + for shallow frying
5. 1 tbsp garlic, chopped
6. 1 small onion, finely chopped
7. 1/2 tsp fresh thyme, chopped
8. Salt to taste
9. Crushed black peppercorns to taste
10. 1½ tbsp corn flour
11. 2 cheese slices, cut into 4 pieces
12. Mustard paste as required
13. 1 large onion, cut into rounds and layers separated
14. Iceberg lettuce leaves as required

How to

1. Heat oil in a nonstick pan. Add garlic and sauté for



30 seconds. Add onion and sauté till translucent. Add thyme, mushrooms, American Pecans, salt, crushed peppercorns and cook on high heat for 4-5 minutes. Transfer the mixture in a

bowl, add corn flour and mix well.

2. Divide the mixture into equal portions and shape them into small tikkis.
3. Heat some oil in a non-stick pan. Shallow-fry the

tikkis from both sides till golden. Place a cheese piece on each tikki, cover and cook till it melts.

4. Spread some mustard paste on each tomato slice. Put few onion rings, lettuce

leaves and a fried tikki on top of 8 tomato slices. Cover with remaining tomato slices, mustard side down. Insert a toothpick through the burger to secure.

5. Serve immediately.

Linzer Cookies Recipe

Linzer Cookies Recipe

Total Time: 30 min

Prep Time : 20 min

Cook Time : 10 min

Serves: 4 Servings

Ingredients

1. 335 Gram Softened butter
2. 235 gram Breakfast sugar
3. 112 gram Cashew nut powder
4. 56 gram Almond powder
5. 2 Whole eggs
6. 40 gram Flour
7. 7 gram Cinnamon powder
8. 7 gram Baking powder
9. A pinch of Salt
10. 1 jar Raspberry jam
11. To dust Icing sugar

How to

1. Whisk together flour, baking power, salt, cinnamon, almond powder and cashew nut powder in a medium bowl. Set aside.
2. Beat the butter and sugar with a mixer until light and fluffy for about 2 to 3 minutes. Beat in the eggs one at time.
3. Gradually add the dry ingredients and mix until just combined.

4. Shape the dough into a disk, wrap securely in plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.
5. When ready to bake just allow the disks to warm up on the counter until they are still firm but not soft.
6. Preheat oven to 180°C and line 2 baking sheets with parchment.
7. On a lightly floured surface, roll out each piece of dough to 4 mm thickness. Cut out using 3 inch cookie cutter and place on prepared baking sheet, spacing them 1 inch apart. Using a 1 inch cookie cutter cut out the centers of half of the rounds, re-rolling the scraps and refrigerate.
8. Bake the bottoms and the tops (the ones with the holes) on separate cookie sheets.
9. Bake, one sheet at a time, rotating the cookie sheet half way through, until the edges begin to brown, 8-10 minutes.
10. Cool slightly on the cookie

sheet and then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

11. When the tops have partial-

ly cool, dust them generously with powdered sugar.

12. Spread about ¾ teaspoon of preserves on each cookie

without holes. Place a powdered top on each bottom and press gently to stick them together.



News

Images of Trump’s second inauguration



President-elect Donald Trump and Melania Trump are greeted by President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden, upon their arrival at the White House, Monday, Jan. 20, 2025, in Washington.



(© Kevin Lamarque/AP)

President Trump gives the inaugural address, a traditional speech by a newly sworn-in president. He speaks for a longer time than he did at his 2017 inauguration and nods to the fact that this year the inauguration coincides with the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday. He also refers to his historic political comeback — saying, “In America, the impossible is what we do best” — and outlines policy plans and an optimistic vision of the coming four years.

News



(© Matt Rourke/AP)

Low temperatures and a frozen layer of snow on the ground forced events indoors. But the “indoor parade” at the Capital One Arena — where Washington’s professional basketball and hockey teams play — gave the youngsters in Vice President Vance’s family a chance to enjoy the entertainment ... and stretch a bit. From left are second lady Usha Vance; two of the Vance children, Mirabel and Ewan; Vice President Vance; Vivek Vance; and President Trump.



(© Christopher Furlong/Getty Images)



(© Evan Vucci/AP)

At left, this marching band — one of several from around the country that had worked hard on its parade routine for the inauguration — is able to strut its stuff indoors at the Capital One Arena, to the delight of the 20,000 people who packed the seats to celebrate with the newly sworn-in president and vice president. At right, after the events of the day, President Trump and first lady Melania Trump, having donned formal attire, greet their supporters at the Liberty Ball, held at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.



President Trump and first lady Melania Trump dance next to Vice President Vance and second lady Usha Vance at the Liberty Ball, one of many held around the city of Washington on the evening of Inauguration Day. The first couple attended several balls, including the Commander in Chief Ball, where they paid tribute to the nation’s military.

Behind the Scenes of U.S. Diplomatic Security: Armored Vehicles in Action



President Trump gives the inaugural address, a traditional speech by a newly sworn-in president. He speaks for a longer time than he did at his 2017 inauguration and nods to the fact that this year the inauguration coincides with the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday. He also refers to his historic political comeback — saying, “In America, the impossible is what we do best” — and outlines policy plans and an optimistic vision of the coming four years.

In this thrilling episode of Jay Leno's Garage, we dive into the world of Diplomatic Security Service's armored vehicles, designed to protect high-profile individuals in dangerous territories. These aren't your average limos from the '80s and '90s; they're modern, sleek, and packed with cutting-edge technology. The team emphasizes

the critical role these vehicles play in safeguarding diplomats in places like Haiti, where security threats are a daily reality. They recount a recent incident where the vehicle took multiple shots but stood strong, showcasing its "ballistic resistant" design.

The Diplomatic Security Ser-

vice spares no expense when it comes to outfitting these vehicles with run-flat tires and top-notch armor, ensuring they can withstand attacks and keep moving. While these armored Chevy Suburbans may look like your regular SUV on the outside, they undergo a rigorous transformation process by third-party armors, inspected

meticulously by the Diplomatic Security Service. From bullet-resistant glass to underbody armor, every detail is crafted to protect the occupants in the most hostile environments.

Behind the wheel of these heavy-duty machines, extensive driver training is essential to navigate their weight and han-

dling characteristics effectively. The vehicles, equipped with four-wheel drive and luxury features, are a blend of power and protection. With an emphasis on safety and security, these armored vehicles are a testament to engineering excellence and the unwavering dedication of the Diplomatic Security Service in fulfilling their mission.



Meet second lady Usha Vance



Usha Chilukuri Vance, wife of J.D. Vance speaks on stage on the third day of the Republican National Convention at the Fiserv Forum on July 17, 2024 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Delegates, politicians, and the Republican faithful are in Milwaukee for the annual convention

Second lady Usha Vance, wife of Vice President JD Vance and the mother of their three children — sons Ewan and Vivek and daughter Mirabel — is an experienced litigator

in a variety of industries. A San Diego native, Usha Vance met her husband while they were attending Yale Law School. She also earned her bachelor's degree from Yale University

and a master's degree from the University of Cambridge. She clerked for Chief Justice John Roberts, of the U.S. Supreme Court, and for Judge Brett Kavanaugh, when he was on the

U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Before that, she clerked for Judge Amul Thapar, then of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

In her free time, Vance serves as a trustee of the Washington National Opera and has served as secretary of the board of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

Marco Rubio: America's new secretary of state

Marco Rubio credits his parents' decision to immigrate to the United States from Cuba in 1956 for "the privilege to be born a citizen of the greatest nation in the history of the world." Rubio's father worked as a banquet bartender, while his mother worked as a hotel maid and stay-at-home mother.

The U.S. Senate historically confirmed Rubio 99-0 as secretary of state just hours after President Trump took his oath of office January 20. Rubio, a Miami native, was sworn in to a role that stretches back to Thomas Jefferson, the first U.S. secretary of state, and is the highest-ranking Hispanic American official in U.S. history. At his confirmation hearing

January 15 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Rubio said he remains committed to placing America's core national interests above all else as America's secretary of state.

"Under President Trump, the top priority of the United States Department of State will be the United States," he said. "The direction [President Trump] has given for the conduct of our foreign policy is clear. Every dollar we spend, every program we fund, every policy we pursue must be justified by the answer to one of three questions: Does it make America safer? Does it make America stronger? Does it make America more prosperous?"



Sports

Australia and Argentina win HSBC SVNS Perth in front of sell-out crowd



Spectacular end to HSBC SVNS Perth with epic women's final in front of a full house at HBF Park

Australia beat Olympic champions New Zealand 28-26 to win thrilling women's final and delight home fans

Argentina prove too strong for hosts in men's final with convincing 41-5 victory to retain Perth title

Spain and France claim men's and women's bronze respectively

New Zealand lead Australia by two points in women's standings while Fiji, Argentina and Spain lead the men's standings with equal points after three rounds

Pools drawn for fourth round of HSBC SVNS in Vancouver on 21-23 February, visit svns.com for information

A sell-out finals day crowd for the second year in succession witnessed a blockbuster day of international rugby sevens as Australia and Argentina were crowned women's and men's HSBC SVNS Perth champions

respectively in a highly charged atmosphere at HBF Park.

In a landmark first, the women's final was the last showpiece match of the tournament, taking centre stage on Sunday evening and bringing down the curtain on an unforgettable HSBC SVNS Perth.

Australia added the Perth title to their Dubai crown as they beat great rivals New Zealand in a pulsating final – thanks to a new generation of players – to send the Perth crowd wild.

Teenager Heidi Dennis scored a try in each half for Australia who edged a thrilling end-to-end final by a 28-26 scoreline.

Australia had their work cut out without the services of two superstars Maddison Levi and Faith Nathan in the second final meeting between the two sides in three HSBC SVNS Series tournaments.

But Dennis and fellow teenager Mackenzie Davis, stepped

up and showed composure beyond their years to help guide Australia to a famous final victory. The key ingredient, player of the match Dennis said immediately afterwards was: "Just grit, all the way to the end. They really made us fight for that one."

France, meanwhile, beat Canada 14-7 to make it three bronze finishes in as many tournaments, and Japan stunned USA to claim fifth place.

WOMEN'S REPORT >>

In the men's competition Argentina became the third different tournament winners in as many rounds in a highly competitive HSBC SVNS 2025.

The defending Perth champions dominated the final against hosts' Australia to claim their first tournament win in this year's HSBC SVNS Series.

Two first-half tries in quick succession set defending tournament champions Argentina

– with head coach Santiago Gómez Cora watching from back home – on the way to back-to-back titles, as they dominated Australia to win 41-5 and claim their second Perth final in a row against the same opponents.

Argentina captain Santiago Mare warned that Los Pumas were improving after a slow start to their season. Immediately after the match, he said: "I'm very proud of my team. We are growing, tournament to tournament – we are looking forward to Vancouver."

Once again impressive Spain claimed bronze with a dramatic 14-7 third-place play-off win against South Africa, while Fiji grabbed the upper hand in a rapidly developing post-Olympic rivalry with France.

MEN'S REPORT >>

RESULTS >>

After three rounds women's Olympic champions New Zealand lead the current standings

on 56 points, closely followed by reigning SVNS champions Australia on 54 points, with France in third on 48 points.

It is extremely tight at the top of the men's standings with Fiji, Argentina and Spain level on 48 points at the top of the table, heading into the next tournament in Vancouver, in February. Spain continue to impress with the quality and consistency of their performances, reaching three consecutive semi-finals.

STANDINGS >>

Men's Olympic champions France defeated SVNS league winners Argentina to claim the inaugural men's HSBC SVNS champions title in 2024.

Meanwhile New Zealand's women secured their second successive Olympic title in Paris and are aiming to reclaim the SVNS Champions title they lost to Australia in 2024.

World Rugby Chief Executive Alan Gilpin said: "To sell-out

Sports

finals day for two years running is a fantastic achievement and a tribute to all the stakeholders involved in delivering what has been another exhilarating event, both on and off the pitch. Congratulations to Australia and Argentina on their well-deserved titles and it was fitting to bring down the curtain with an epic women's final, showcasing the very best of world-class rugby sevens played by these incred-

ible athletes."

Our thanks and gratitude goes to Western Australia Premier Roger Cook, Tourism Western Australia, Venues West, Rugby Australia and our title partner HSBC."

The pool draw for the fourth round of HSBC SVNS in Vancouver on 21-23 February took place shortly following the final

whistle in Perth and sees some mouth-watering match ups.

Men's pool A sees Argentina, France, Great Britain and Kenya. Pool B includes Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and Ireland. In pool C are Spain, Fiji, Uruguay and the USA.

In the women's draw Australia face Canada, Brazil and Spain in pool A. New Zealand

are in pool B with the USA, China and Ireland. Pool C includes France, Japan, Fiji and Great Britain.

HSBC SVNS VANCOUVER INFORMATION >>

HSBC SVNS 2025 features seven events across seven months in seven iconic global destinations. Six regular season rounds will be played in Dubai,

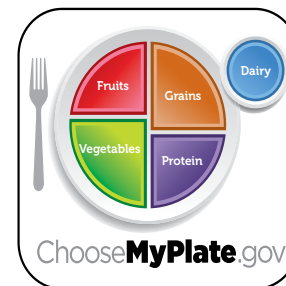
Cape Town, Perth, Vancouver, Hong Kong and Singapore to decide the HSBC SVNS League Winners, before the HSBC SVNS World Championship in Los Angeles, which will see the top eight men's and women's teams compete at Dignity Health Sports Park which will host the LA 2028 Olympic rugby sevens.



10 tips

**Nutrition
Education Series**

healthy eating for an active lifestyle



10 tips for combining good nutrition and physical activity

For youth and adults engaging in physical activity and sports, healthy eating is essential for optimizing performance. Combining good nutrition with physical activity can lead to a healthier lifestyle.

1 maximize with nutrient-packed foods

Give your body the nutrients it needs by eating a variety of nutrient-packed food, including whole grains, lean protein, fruits and vegetables, and low-fat or fat-free dairy. Eat less food high in solid fats, added sugars, and sodium (salt).

2 energize with grains

Your body's quickest energy source comes from foods such as bread, pasta, oatmeal, cereals, and tortillas. Be sure to make at least half of your grain food choices whole-grain foods like whole-wheat bread or pasta and brown rice.

3 power up with protein

Protein is essential for building and repairing muscle. Choose lean or low-fat cuts of beef or pork, and skinless chicken or turkey. Get your protein from seafood twice a week. Quality protein sources come from plant-based foods, too.

4 mix it up with plant protein foods

Variety is great! Choose beans and peas (kidney, pinto, black, or white beans; split peas; chickpeas; hummus), soy products (tofu, tempeh, veggie burgers), and unsalted nuts and seeds.

5 vary your fruits and vegetables

Get the nutrients your body needs by eating a variety of colors, in various ways. Try blue, red, or black berries; red and yellow peppers; and dark greens like spinach and kale. Choose fresh, frozen, low-sodium canned, dried, or 100 percent juice options.



6 don't forget dairy

Foods like fat-free and low-fat milk, cheese, yogurt, and fortified soy beverages (soymilk) help to build and maintain strong bones needed for everyday activities.

7 balance your meals

Use MyPlate as a reminder to include all food groups each day. Learn more at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.

8 drink water

Stay hydrated by drinking water instead of sugary drinks. Keep a reusable water bottle with you to always have water on hand.

9 know how much to eat

Get personalized nutrition information based on your age, gender, height, weight, current physical activity level, and other factors. Use SuperTracker to determine your calorie needs, plan a diet that's right for you, and track progress toward your goals. Learn more at www.SuperTracker.usda.gov.

10 reach your goals

Earn Presidential recognition for reaching your healthy eating and physical activity goals. Log on to www.presidentschallenge.org to sign up for the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA+).



Go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov and www.Fitness.gov for more information.

DG TipSheet No. 25
March 2013
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Sports News

Suaalii to start at fullback for NSW Waratahs' trial against Brumbies

Joseph-Aukuo Suaalii will make his first appearance for the NSW Waratahs in tomorrow's trial match against the ACT Brumbies. Suaalii will be trialled at fullback as part of a star-studded Waratahs backline in their final hitout before their opening match against the Highlanders on February 14th. The rugby league convert has been exclusively used as an outside centre at international level. Coach Dan McKellar says there's so much training they can do, but now it is about him putting into practice in a match situation what he has worked hard on. Suaalii is one of ten

Wallabies in the starting side, with three further on the bench. This includes Taniela Tupou, with Dan Botha starting in the front row alongside the returning Dave Porecki and Angus Bell. In other trial matches, the Highlanders will meet Moana Pasifika, the Crusaders will play the Blues, the Reds will face the Bristol Bears, and the Chiefs will take on the Hurricanes. The 2025 Shop N Save Super Rugby Pacific will kick-off on the 14th of next month with the Swire Shipping Fijian taking on the Brumbies on the 15th at the HFC Bank Stadium at 3.35pm.



Fiji Men's 7s to kick start Vancouver 7s campaign against giant killers Uruguay

The Fiji Airways Men's National 7s side will kick start their HSBC Vancouver 7s campaign next month against one of the series' giant killers, Uruguay, in the first match of the tournament. Uruguay shocked the rugby world at the recent HSBC Perth 7s after defeating Fiji 24-17 in their first pool match last weekend. They went on to beat NZ 17-12 in their second pool match which saw them qualify for the quarter finals. The Uruguayans will look to repeat the feat they achieved in Perth but Fiji will want to get their revenge in Vancouver. Fiji will take on Uruguay at 7.18am on Saturday 22nd February in their first pool match, they will then take on the USA at 12.45pm on the same day, before play-

ing Spain at 6.52am on Sunday 23rd February in their last pool match. The men's cup quarter final will kick off at 12.51pm Sunday 23rd February, the cup semi finals will begin at 8.30am Monday 24th February, and the Cup Final will kick off at 1.05pm. Meanwhile, the Fiji Airways Fijiana 7s will take on Japan at 10am on 22nd February in their first pool match, they will then play France at 3.52pm on the same day, before playing Great Britain at 9.18am on Sunday 23rd February in their last pool match. The women's cup quarter finals will kick off at 3.32pm on Sunday 23rd February, the semi finals will begin at 9.14am on Monday 23rd February, and the cup final will kick off at 1.41pm.



Drua to have a bit more cohesion and planning before the season starts

The Swire Shipping Fijian Drua is working to have a bit more cohesion and planning before the kick-off of the 2025 Shop N Save Super Rugby Pacific competition next month. Halfback Simone Kuruvoli says they are looking to gel in well as a team, especially the forwards, before the start of the season. Kuruvoli says they have been practising it throughout the week of their trial match

against the Rugby Football Club Los Angeles last week, ensuring that their set pieces and combinations are fine-tuned. He further says that the team's goal this year is to make it into the top 4 of the Super Rugby Pacific competition. The Drua will now turn their focus to the start of the season, where they meet the Brumbies on 15th February at the HFC Bank Stadium in Suva at 3.35pm.



Sports News

Nagasau sets sight on representing Fijiana 15s at Women's RWC after joining Drua Women

Rooster Chicken Fijian Drua Women's new signing, Rusila Nagasau has set her sights on representing the Fijiana 15s side in this year's Women's Rugby World Cup that will be held in England. The 37-year-old says that is one of her main targets after joining the Drua vuvale. Not only is she setting her sights on the white jumper for the World Cup, but Nagasau has also set her target of helping the Drua Women win back the Super W title that they lost last year. Nagasau spent most of her career playing 7s rugby and represented the Fiji Airways Fijiana 7s side in the HSBC SVNS World Series, and was also part of the Fijiana 7s side that won bronze at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. She also won silver with the Fijiana 7s at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. Nagasau says the transition from 7s to 15s was not that hard because it is just rugby after all, and the only difference is the numbers on the field. The



Wailevu, Cakaudrove woman has now forced her way into the final 30-member Fijian Drua Women's squad for the 2025 Super Rugby W season and hopes to get as much game time in the competition. The Drua Women will kick start their 2025 campaign against the Waratahs on Friday 28th February 2025 at 5.05pm in Sydney.

17-year-old Drua youngster Yee fell in love with rugby after her first training session

It was love at first try for 17-year-old Rooster Chicken Fijian Drua Women forward Carletta Yee when she went for her first rugby training back in high school as she never looked back after trying out the sport. The former Mahatma Gandhi Memorial School student told fjiivillage Sports that she was invited by one of her senior schoolmates to a rugby training session one afternoon, and she just fell in love with the sport from there. Fast forward to more than a year later, the Levuka, Lakeba, Lau youngster has forced her way into the Fijian Drua Women's final 30-member squad that was named yesterday for the 2025 Super Rugby W competition. Yee says her journey to rugby stardom was also filled with challenges and one of those challenges was being looked down upon because of her age.

team and also from other teams. She says she has set her goal for this year and one of them is to

make the matchday 23 squad every week, and she hopes to be playing in front of her fam-

ily on home soil this season. The Drua Women will kick start their 2025 Super Rugby W cam-

paign against the Waratahs on Friday 28th February 2025 in Sydney.



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Sports News

Drua Women looking to reclaim Super Rugby W title

The Rooster Chicken Fijian Drua Women's side is looking to take back the titles they won in 2022 and 2023 as they prepare for the start of the Super Rugby W competition next month. The Drua Women's team made headlines as they won the Super Rugby W title back to back in 2022 and 2023. Coach Ifereimi Tawake says the aim for this year is to win back their title. He says this will bring back a sense of pride into the Drua Club. Last year, the Drua Women's side won three of their round-robin matches and made it to the final, where they lost to the NSW Waratahs 50-14 in the final. Meanwhile, the Drua Women's side will face the Waratahs on the 28th of next month in their first 2025 Super Rugby W match.



8 new players and 4 returning players in Fijian Drua Women's 30-member squad

The Rooster Chicken Fijian Drua has today announced its 30-member squad for the 2025 Super Rugby W competition, with eight new players forcing their way into the team and four players making their return. The squad also features three Olympic bronze medallists from the 2020 Tokyo Games, as well as, a 17-year-old rookie. Vitalina Naikore, who was a breakout star for the Drua and the competition in 2022, is one of the four returnees for this season. For the first time ever, a Drua Women's Development squad has also been announced to supplement and support the main squad, given a large casualty list of key players. Currently in the rehab group hoping to make their return at some point during the season are stars and regular starters like Vani Arei, Atelaite Buna, Merewalesi Rokouono, Merewai Cumu and Sulita Waisega. The Drua says this group is under a focused rehabilitation programme aimed at getting them ready for a return to Super Rugby W. The 30-member Fijian Drua Women's squad include Salanieta Nabuli, Bitila Tawake, Loraini Senivutu, Keleni Marawa, Isa-



bella Koi, Vika Matarugu, Tiana Robanakadavu, Anasimeci Korovata, Mereoni Nakesa, Asinate Serevi, Merevesi Ofakimalino, Karalaini Naisewa, Nunia

Daunimoala, Raijieli Daveua, Alfreda Fisher, Carleta Yee, Evivi Senikarivi, Noelani Baselala, Kolora Lomani, Salanieta Kinita, Luisa Tisolo, Setaita

Railumu, Josivini Naihamu, Aloesi Nakoci, Rusila Nagasau, Vitalina Naikore, Merewairita Neivoha, Ema Adivitaloga, Repeka Tove and Imeri Naki. The

Fijian Drua Women's side will meet the Waratahs on the 28th of next month in their first 2025 Super Rugby W match.

Sports News

Fiji Men's 7s taking every tournament in World Series as it comes

The Fiji Airways Men's National 7s side has set their plan of taking each tournament in the HSBC SVNS World Series as it comes, and after their outing at the Perth 7s, they now turn their focus to the upcoming Vancouver 7s next month. Coach Osea Kolinisau says it is not good to be focusing on other tournaments when there is a tournament yet to be played. Kolinisau says their main priority now is to keep their spot at the top of the table. Fiji will take on Uruguay at 7.18am on Saturday 22nd February in their first pool match, they will then take on the USA at 12.45pm on the same day, before playing Spain at 6.52am on Sunday 23rd February in their last pool match.

The men's cup quarter final will kick off at 12.51pm Sunday 23rd February, the cup semi-finals will begin at 8.30am Monday 24th February, and the Cup



Final will kick off at 1.05pm. Meanwhile, the Fiji Airways Fijiana 7s will take on Japan at 10am on 22nd February in

their first pool match, they will then play France at 3.52pm on the same day, before playing Great Britain at 9.18am on Sun-

day 23rd February in their last pool match. The women's cup quarter finals will kick off at 3.32pm on Sunday 23rd Febru-

ary, the semi finals will begin at 9.14am on Monday 23rd February, and the cup final will kick off at 1.41pm.

2025 Super Rugby Pacific to be aired live only on Sky Pacific & DTV App

Great news for rugby lovers as the 2025 Shop N Save Super Rugby Pacific will be aired live on Sky Pacific and the DTV app. Digicel Fiji has secured front-row seats to an action-packed season headlined by fierce rivalries and a new finals format. Digicel Fiji says the Swire Shipping Fijian Drua, in its fourth season in the competition, will play seven games at home, while the Moana Pasifika is confirmed to play one blockbuster match in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, in March against the Chiefs this year. They say the 2025 Super Rugby Pacific kicks off with New Zealand heavyweights the Crusaders and Hurricanes battling it out in Christchurch on February 14th and the Fijian Drua will host the Brumbies in Suva on the 15th. There will be a Culture Round in Round 3 in February and March, a Kids Round in Round 5 in March and ANZAC Day will be honoured in Round 11 in April. Digicel Fiji says the DTV app allows customers to stream games on multiple devices – smartphones, tablets, and Android TVs – re-

gardless of their network provider.

They say any device or network approach combined with no installation costs offers flexibility and helps to ensure that no one is left out from viewing their favourite teams in Super Rugby Pacific. They also say DTV's range of plans further solidifies Digicel Fiji's commitment to making quality entertainment accessible to all

Fijians. Digicel Fiji adds that Sky Pacific delivers a premium home entertainment experience tailored for those seeking a more comprehensive offering of high-quality viewing experience within the home. They say both DTV and Sky Pacific are committed to providing rugby fans, with access to the action, catering to different needs and preferences without compromising their viewing

experience. Digicel Fiji CEO Farid Mohammed says they are thrilled to bring all matches of the Super Rugby Pacific 2025 season live to DTV and Sky Pacific, as rugby is more than just a sport, it's a passion that unites our communities. Mohammed says Fijians now have access to premium sports content with the DTV app flexibility to stream matches on any device and network, and Sky Pacific's

sign-up and reconnect offers are making it easier than ever for rugby lovers to enjoy world-class action. Digicel Fiji says to prepare for the blockbuster rugby season, customers are encouraged to visit a Digicel Fiji Retail Store to sign up for Sky Pacific for \$99 and get 28 days of free viewing, a Sky Pacific dish and installation or reconnect at a store or via MyCash for \$58 and get 28 days of viewing.



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<p>7 \$23 /each Chukar Pollo Chukar 石雞(番雞)</p>	<p>8 \$50 /each Big Muscovy Duck Pato Grande 番鴨</p>	<p>9 \$25 /each Small Duck Pato Pequeno 鴨</p>	<p>10 \$20 /for 5 Quail Codorniz 鸚鴉</p>	<p>11 \$12 /each Pigeon Paloma 肉鴿</p>	<p>12 small \$35 medium \$40 large \$50 Rabbit Conejo 肉兔</p>
<p>13 \$12 /each \$30 /for 3 Old Fowls Gallina Viejas 老紅雞</p>	<p>14 \$30 /each Guinea Hens Gallina De Guinea 伊路雞</p>	<p>15 \$25 /each Pheasant Faisan 雉雞</p>	<p>16 \$7 /flat \$15 /3 flats Eggs Huevos 雞蛋</p>	<p>Monday & Tuesday Special Buy 5 Get ONE FREE Especial De Lunes y Martes Compra cinco y llevate uno gratis 周一及周二特價 買五送一</p>	

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