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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Physical fitness Standardisation in schools**

**Suva, Fiji Islands.** A physical fitness testing manual published by the Fiji National University (FNU) for primary and secondary schools in Fiji will not only serve as a medium to test the physical fitness of students but also produce healthier Fiji.

Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Honourable Dr Mahendra Reddy while launching Fiji's first ever physical fitness testing manual on Nasinu campus, said the future Fijian society's physical status is defined to a large extent on the physical status of the students and that the launch of this manual is very timely.

"The quality of citizens, labor force and future leaders of our country depends to a large extent on our ability to train students physically in our school system. In a country where we see NCDs or lack of fitness, to a large extent it is because the school system is not able to mold the children well," said the minister.

The manual, based on the research carried out in 20 primary and secondary schools from Lautoka and 20 from Suva, is authored by Mr Alifereti Cawanibuka, Sports Development Advisor at FNU at the College of Humanities and Education.

This is the first ever manual pertaining to general fitness attained by each child from age nine to 18 as there were no standard physical fitness test programmes in schools in Fiji.

Dr Reddy said aligning the physical status of the students in the index of five to 18 years would enable a solid physical status of future Fijians.

The Honourable Minister said the education ministry is planning to launch a drive in the school system to ensure that every child participates in physical fitness activities.

"Sports is a subset of physical education to the extent that contributing towards physical fitness of the child will also contribute towards child's economic prosperity, given that sports has become an industry in Fiji. Unfortunately, we have not portrayed sports in that light as how the sporting sector has been contributing to Fiji's economy.

"It's time that we look at examining in detail the contribution of sports as an industry together with how our sporting sector markets other industry of the country, this hasn't been valid appropriately till to date," said Dr Reddy.

Dean of College of Humanities & Education, Dr Eci Nabalarua said the fitness manual will assist to combat the rising problem of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in the country and it coincides with the universities mission on ensuring health and wellness of staff and students.

“After so many years of hard work, the author of this manual is able to put together and bring out a fitness manual which is so much needed in this day and age to gauge how healthy our children are. The manual will also assist in enhancing the academic performance of the students,” said Dr Nabalarua.

Author, Mr Alifereti Cawanibuka has represented the country in various sporting field as a player and coach.

Mr Cawanibuka, who was an executive member of Fiji Rugby Union Board in 1994-1995, successfully completed IRB Level three coaching course in 2000.

“As far as its impact on health related fitness is concerned, it could be the beginning of the long-term fight against NCDs by our new and young generation. When the schools start implementing this, it should automatically change the attitude and mind of the students,” said Mr Cawanibuka.

Thirty-two primary and 18 secondary school students from the Nasinu vicinity were involved in the demonstration of the methods used in the manual during the launch. The data gathered will be analysed by the Sports Science department and will be sent back to the schools for their reference.

The education ministry will distribute the manuals to the school libraries to ensure the teachers utilise the correct methods to test how physically tuned the children were at different levels in different years.

**For further information, please contact the Communications Office on 339 4000 extension 2890/2886 or Senior Public Relations Officer, Ranbeer Singh on Email: [SPRO@fnu.ac.fj](mailto:SPRO@fnu.ac.fj) or Phone: 9895267**

**About the Fiji National University:** The Fiji National University (FNU) was established through the merger of 7 government-owned tertiary institutions in Fiji, and commenced operations from 1 January 2010. The constituent institutions are found at over 40 different locations across Fiji, and collectively offer Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Degrees, Postgraduate qualifications and Skills Upgrading for those who are already in employment. Approximately 30,000 students pass through the University each year. Over the last six years of its operations, the University has registered major achievements with regard to new programme delivery, quality improvements and contribution to research and publications via its 5 Colleges: The College of Humanities & Education (CHE), the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences (CMNHS), the College of Engineering, Science & Technology (CEST), the College of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (CAFF), the College of Business, Hospitality & Tourism Studies (CBHTS) and the National Training & Productivity Centre (NTPC).