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FNU Vice Chancellor, Dr Ganesh Chand and NEC Chairman, Mr Taito Waqa at the signing.

FNU CONTINUES COMMITMENT TO UNEMPLOYED

FIJI National University is committed to helping train unemployed people in the country by providing funds.

In an agreement signed last week, a total of \$3 million over three years will be given to the National Employment Centre through the National Training and Productivity Centre.

Speaking at the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, FNU Vice Chancellor Dr Ganesh Chand said the agreement for the grant was reached earlier by Ministry of Labour and former Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji.

He said since the merger of TPAF with FNU it has become the responsibility of the University to honour the agreement.

The money that will go to NEC will be from the levies paid by the employers in the country.

“So it is really the contribution of employers to the training of the unemployed in Fiji,” the Vice Chancellor said.

National Employment Centre chairman Taito Waqa thanked FNU for the grant.

“Unemployment in the country is quite high and NEC has been tasked, with other

employment creation agencies in the government, to bring down the rate,” he said.

By next year he anticipated the unemployment rate would be reduced from 8.6 per cent to 4.2 per cent.

In terms of volume, the figure should be 14,000 compared to 28,000 recorded in the 2007 census, he said.

Mr Waqa said their total budget for this year will be \$2m, with another \$1m from the government.

He said there was a huge demand for skilled workers in the region and they were trying to tap retirees to be volunteers in other countries around the region.

National Training and Productivity Centre Director TVET, Jone Usamate said one of the biggest impediments in Fiji was not being able to fully utilise its resources. He said NEC would harness this.

Mr Usamate said the agreement signifies that FNU was maintaining all commitments that former TPAF had to the employers in the country.

“I am very glad that we have reached this stage,” he said.

NTPC PART OF A SOLUTION FOR FIJI'S HOUSING PROBLEMS

THE FNU'S National Training & Productivity Centre has been invited to be part of a sustainable housing initiative to help find solutions for Fiji people needing affordable, low cost housing.

The South Pacific Sustainable Housing Expo is an initiative set up by the Tahila group in conjunction with the Public Rental Board and Housing Authority, to provide a low-cost housing exhibition for Fiji people.

The Expo will provide information, skills and firsthand experience of building low cost, affordable homes.

Tahila Group Principal Consultant Phil Gerlach has approached NTPC to participate in the expo and provide a "how to build your own home" course at the scene, literally showing people the basic skills of house building.

"The Chairman and board of the PRB and the HA invited NTPC to engage in a positive and constructive way in this event that will support and advance the Ministry's work and the National Housing Policy," Mr Gerlach said.

"It is an event that will promote Fiji not only nationally and regionally but internationally as a leader in trying

to solve a worldwide problem of sustainable affordable housing."

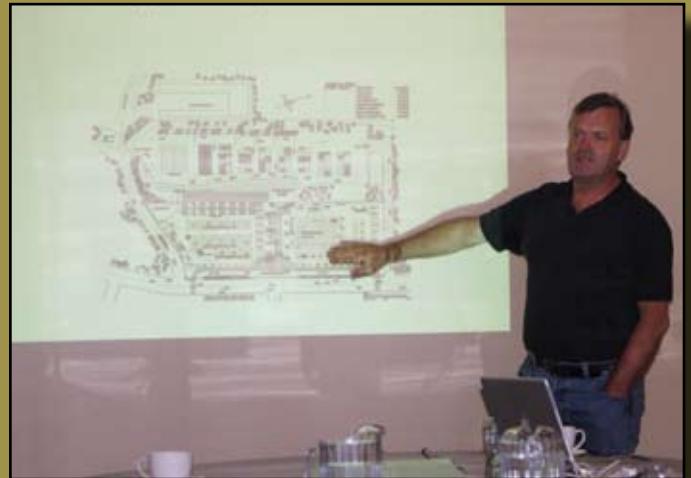
Mr Gerlach said he believed the initiative would help reduce squatter settlements that are currently increasing at five per cent a year. In turn this could solve many other problems, such as personal hygiene and unhealthy environment.

He explained that the expo would not be a trade show; it would provide real outcomes, real information and entertainment for everyone to enjoy.

"The expo will include free films, event opening and closing ceremonies, the how to build your own home courses, healthy cooking courses, children's entertainment, live televised events and a series of television programs, workshops and seminars.

Exhibits will include houses made out of shipping containers and other cost effective methods to encourage

the people, particularly low income earners, to learn and implement such



Tahila Group Principal Consultant, Mr Phil Gerlach at the workshop

methods into their own homes".

National Training and Productivity Centre Director TVET Mr Jone Usamate and other staff members viewed a presentation on the expo on 5 February.

Mr Usamate said he was particularly impressed with the methods of building low cost houses to make them affordable but safe in different types of weather conditions including cyclones.

HIGH RISK TREND IN FATTY FOODS



Ms Bandna Chand at her office on Sarnabula Campus

Bakery products in Fiji have high trans fatty acid content of the sort associated with non communicable diseases.

Research co-authored by Bandna Chand, a Lecturer in the Department of Food Sciences, School of Applied Sciences at the College of Engineering, Science and Technology, revealed this disturbing trend.

Ms Chand presented her findings in India during an International Life Science and Technology Conference held at Mumbai, India from 7 to 9 January 2011.

Her research was on "the effects of processing on trans fatty acid content of

selected foods and oils available in Fiji".

"The first part of this research included the analysis of trans fatty acids in 64 food samples. Most of the foods were locally manufactured," she said.

Ms Chand said the second part of the research was based on the effects of temperature, time and the cooking material on trans fatty acid formation in various cooking oils available in Fiji.

She said the high amount of fat in bakery products may be due to the use of vegetable shortening, which is normally a hydrogenated fat.

"Hydrogenation of fats gives rise to trans fatty acids in foods," she said.

Fried foods, including fast foods, had high levels of trans fats also.

Ms Chand said the fried foods she tested were bought from restaurants where hydrogenated vegetable shortening was used as frying oil; and most fast foods outlets re-used frying oil which further increased the trans fatty acid content of the food.

"Among the oil samples, the amount of trans fat formed depends on the temperature and time of heating," she said. She said the research found that the higher the temperature, the longer the oil is used for frying, the higher the amount of trans fatty acid formed.

Ms Chand said the rate of non communicable diseases was quite high in Fiji. This was a matter of concern because Fiji had no legislation for the labeling of information about trans fatty acids on products.

She said the conference had been a wonderful opportunity to connect with people in similar research area and share ideas. It gave her a chance to see what was new in the food industry, to explore new solutions and trends.

She thanked the University for funding her participation in the conference and said she would like to encourage other academic staff to be involved in similar activities.

IMPROVING MORALE WITH NEEDED EQUIPMENT



Trainee doctors and nurses at the Saint Giles Hospital will now learn with the help of new facilities at the hospital.

The College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences donated \$12,000 worth of equipment to the hospital through AusAID grants.

The equipment donated included laptop computers, stationery, desks, printer, fax machine and photocopier.

College Dean Professor Ian Rouse said he was committed to improving education levels of all staff who work in the health area, particularly the mental health area.

"We place a significant number of our trainee doctors and nurses at St Giles as part

of their block rotations. I became aware that despite having a very nice training venue they had no facilities," he said.

"It was easy for me then to make a small donation because it improved the training for our students".

Prof Rouse said the orderlies at the hospital have to do a very difficult job with limited training.

"I wanted to provide them with a morale boost. I have also committed to supporting the training updates for other orderlies," he said.

Prof Rouse said he was committed to the area of mental health area and would provide support throughout the year.

SPECIALLY COLLECTING FOR NADI LIBRARY



THE Nadi campus library has been improved with donation of books from Nadi residents.

The texts on accounting, management and computing could not have come at a better time, Professor Subramani said.

He said the timely donation came from Nadi residents Mrs Nirmala Singh and her daughter Miss Varsha Singh.

Nadi Campus had splendid new library facilities and urgently needed books and periodicals to match, he said.

To support that the Campus was launching a series of projects to acquire

needed publications.

"The recent donation is very useful and we are very grateful for the assistance," he said.

Prof Subramani said there were further moves to build a Special Collections Division at the Nadi library.

"We are calling on all FNU and other authors to send their publications to the Librarian, Nadi Campus.

"Ultimately we envisage a community research and learning facility for the whole of Nadi on this Campus."

SELF INTEREST INVOLVED IN LACK OF COMPETITION

LACK of competition culture is a major challenge in small states such as Fiji, the Dean of College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies Dr Mahendra Reddy said.

Speaking at a workshop on Competition Law and Policy in Pacific Small States held in Apia, Samoa last month, he said there was lack of a competition culture amongst the general population and the key stakeholders in the economy.

This was because of the self-interest of those who expected to lose with the introduction of competition and who had the power to oppose it.

"Competition authorities face a number of challenges or obstacles when they promote competition, whether that promotion is through enforcing a competition law or through trying to persuade society and government of the advantages of competition," he said.

Furthermore, he said, government at local, state and national levels was taking actions that undermined competition in their regulatory, procurement, privatisation, subsidy and entrepreneurial policies

Competition led to small government and a market based check system, removing any possibilities for rent seeking behavior, Dr Reddy said.

The meeting noted that the ultimate objective of competition law and policy is to maximise consumer welfare through fair prices, improvement in product quality and adequate supplies to consumers.

The meeting heard that competition law and policy should also aim at enhancing economic growth by encouraging efficiency, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The main principles of competition law that had evolved in larger developed economies are generally relevant also to smaller economies. although the way they are applied may have to be nuanced differently to take into account the particular characteristics of small insular economies, especially their small domestic market and their remoteness.

DEAN CAFF TO SPEAK ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Effects of climate change on agriculture and how farmers adjust to the different conditions is the topic of an address the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Dr Paras Nath has been invited to give this month in India.

He will be speaking at the 13th Indian Agricultural Scientists and Farmers Congress at the University of Allahabad.

The Bioed Research Institute of Agriculture and Technology has also asked Dr Nath to chair a scientific session at the two day congress, 19-20 February.

YOUTHS LEARN HOW TO SPOT OPPORTUNITIES



There was a need for youths in rural areas to focus on identifying business opportunities around them and make use of the resources available.

The Manger for the Northern Development Program Waisele Tuidama gave this advice at a one-day workshop organised by Fiji National University Labasa Campus at Nabukadogo village in Macuata.

Mr Tuidama said businesses such as fishing, planting crops on the large areas of available land and piggery farms could be successfully explored because they had large potential for growth. But the business must make profit in order to be sustainable.

Labasa Campus Coordinator and workshop organiser Gaya Prasad said the workshop focused on Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development-Challenges and Opportunities for Youths in Rural Communities.

He said the objectives of the workshop were to identify and discuss challenges to and opportunities for entrepreneurial activities for youths in their communities, to analyse the impact of culture on the success and sustainability of business activities in rural areas, understand the key features of entrepreneurship and small business management, and to identify sustainable entrepreneurial activities and ways of implementing them.

A total of 35 youths from Naduri, Nabuladogo and Nalalau villages attended the workshop to learn how to make a useful living in rural areas.

"They identified opportunities available within the village environment which could be capitalised on to venture out into successful business initiatives," he said.

Mr Prasad said the increasing number of unemployed youths in Fiji was not only a growing challenge to the government and planners but also a concern to parents because the young people were unable to contribute meaningfully towards the social and economic development of themselves, their family and the nation as a whole.

He said a number of youth groups had been formed in Fiji to bring youths together to help them achieve their aims and aspirations and ultimately realise their full potential.

"However there have been varying degrees of success," he said.

Senior Youth Officer Northern Eminoni Roradua emphasised governments' commitment to provide a roadmap for youths to contribute directly to nation building.

WHAT TO LEARN IN RAKIRAKI



STUDENTS from around Rakiraki took advantage of an FNU awareness team in the district to find out information about what the University had to offer them and to apply.

Reapi Nawaibale said she was keen to pursue her studies in the science field.

The 19 year old student said to attend classes at the Ba campus was ideal for many students in the district because if they had to move to Suva, parents would have to fork out a lot not only for tuition fees but also accommodation.

"I want to become a laboratory technician. I am always fascinated with science and technology," she said.

"I am the first from my family to further my studies in the field of science and I am looking forward to this."

She and many other students who had visited the FNU office next door to the Provincial Administrators office inquired about whether FNU would start up distance learning centers in Rakiraki.

Another student, Lanietta Adi, said she was interested in studying hospitality and tourism in the housekeeping field.

Heading the awareness team Lecturer Ratu Meli Bolobolo said many students and parents visited the team asking questions and checking the programs that FNU Ba campus offered.

"Many had asked if FNU was going to open an information office or start up a distance learning program in the not too distant future," he said.

"These awareness programs are good because people get a chance to come in and speak to us one on one and find out what is on offer.

"We have also been getting responses from those who are working in the district wanting to take up further studies."

The week long program started on Monday 31 January

PACIFIC SCIENCE CONGRESS

THE 22nd Pacific Science Congress will be held at from 14-18 June 2011 at Kuala Lumpur Malaysia.

The Congress provides an interdisciplinary platform for scientists from the region to assess and prioritise issues requiring scientific research; brings together scientists from more remote states; catalyses international and cross-disciplinary collaboration; and announces and establishes new research initiatives.

The Congress is calling for workshops and symposia on the theme Meeting the Challenges of Global Change.

Important Dates

15 January 2011:

Deadline for abstract submissions.

15 March 2011:

Notification of acceptance of abstracts.

31 March 2011:

Deadline for early bird registration

18 May 2011:

Deadline for late registration

18 May 2011:

Deadline for refunds for cancelled registrations.

For more information please visit the conference website on www.22ndpsc.net or contact the congress secretariat on email: nasa@akademisains.gov.my or fardy@akademisains.gov.my