



INSIDE FNU

Inspiring Journeys, Lasting Impact

FNU-Taiwan Partnership Opens New Opportunities for Vanua Levu and Beyond



Members of the FNU's Senior Leadership Team and representatives from the Taipei Trade Office in Fiji and the Taiwan Technical Mission during the MoU signing. *Photo: Vetaia Dakua*

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By Wati Talebula

The Fiji National University's (FNU) 75 acres of land in Dreketi, Vanua Levu, could open new opportunities for collaboration between FNU and the Taiwan Technical Mission (TTM) in agriculture, training, research, fisheries, forestry and community development.

The opportunity was highlighted by FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between FNU and the Taiwan Technical Mission earlier this month.

Professor Nabobo-Baba said FNU's land in the North could provide a strong base for practical collaboration, especially as Fiji looks towards greater development in Vanua Levu.

"We see the future of FNU sitting with you in Dreketi, because the country is moving. The next 10 years will be about Vualiku," Professor Nabobo-Baba stated.

Turning Land into Practical Learning

Professor Nabobo-Baba added that the partnership could go beyond student attachments and lead to wider collaboration between FNU and institutions in Taiwan.

"With this agreement, we'll see workshops, we'll see demonstration farms, we'll see extension services. This is where we can connect our teaching, our research and our communities," she stated.

The Vice-Chancellor also stated that FNU's land in Vanua Levu could support these activities while bringing together teaching, research and work with local communities.

The partnership could give students more opportunities to learn through practical activities while allowing researchers and communities to work together on issues that matter to the region.

Unlocking Opportunities in Fisheries

Fisheries is another area where FNU sees opportunities for collaboration.

Professor Nabobo-Baba pointed to FNU's land in Bua and the potential of the Solevu Bay area as opportunities that could support future fisheries activities.

"I also see your fisheries happening with us in Bua. We have one of the biggest plots of land in Bua given to us," she said.

Professor Nabobo-Baba highlighted that these opportunities could help FNU strengthen

practical learning and research while supporting communities that depend on fisheries and other natural resources.

Expanding Fiji's Forestry Future

Forestry is another area where FNU hopes to work more closely with Taiwan.

The University is continuing to strengthen its forestry development in Colo-i-Suva and is looking at opportunities to expand this work across Fiji.

"As we move there and as we move all over the country with forestry, we see Taiwan moving with us," Professor Nabobo-Baba said.

The partnership could create more opportunities for forestry training, research and practical activities across the country.

Taking Training Beyond the University

The Vice-Chancellor added that FNU wanted the partnership to reach beyond individual campuses and centres and have a wider impact across Fiji and the Pacific.

"I know the training will go beyond the university boundary. Koronivia is only one of our centres, but the work, I think, in the future will happen all over the country, all over the Pacific too."

Professor Nabobo-Baba reiterated that the aim was to take the benefits of training, research and collaboration into communities and industries, rather than keeping them within the university.

Keeping Education Connected to Fiji's Needs

Professor Nabobo-Baba said FNU also has a responsibility to ensure its teaching and research remained relevant to Fiji's development needs.

She highlighted the long history of FNU and its constituent institutions, saying the University had a strong foundation on which to build new opportunities for students, staff and researchers.

The Vice-Chancellor further stated that partnerships such as the one with Taiwan, could help FNU strengthen the connection between what students learn, the research carried out by the University and the needs of communities and industries.

Investing in Students, Staff and Research

The Vice-Chancellor also stated that the partnership could bring benefits for students, staff and researchers through professional development, knowledge sharing and stronger research collaboration.

"The value of our agreement we're signing today, through its implementation, we will see

students gain, professional development of staff will have been boosted, the research, there is no doubt in my mind, with your collaboration and with other institutes in Taiwan, would also be very strengthened," Professor Nabobo-Baba said.

Bringing Classroom Learning to Life

One of the immediate benefits of the partnership will be opportunities for FNU students to undertake industrial attachments at the Taiwan Technical Mission's Centre for Agriculture Technology Transfer in Nausori.

The attachments will give students practical experience and help them strengthen their technical skills while applying what they learn in the classroom.

The experience will also give students an opportunity to see how their knowledge can be applied in real working environments.

From Partnership to Practical Action

The partnership could also lead to demonstration farms, training programmes, research activities and community initiatives.

These activities would create more opportunities for students and staff to gain practical experience while also supporting local communities.

There is also potential for FNU and its partners in Taiwan to explore new areas of cooperation and share knowledge and experience.

Connecting Land, Learning and Communities

For FNU, the MOU is more than an agreement between two organisations.

It creates an opportunity to connect the University's land, teaching, research and practical experience in ways that can benefit students and communities.

FNU's land and facilities across the country provide opportunities for students and researchers to learn and work outside the classroom while engaging directly with communities and industries.

Building a Future for Vualiku

As Fiji looks towards the development of Vualiku, FNU is looking forward to working with Taiwan to turn these opportunities into practical outcomes for students, communities and the country.

The MOU provides a starting point for FNU and the Taiwan Technical Mission to build on their cooperation and explore new opportunities in education, training, research and community development.



Aklesh Chand
Photo: Christal Kapoor

By Christal Kapoor

For Fiji National University (FNU) academic Aklesh Chand, being selected for specialised training in India is more than a personal achievement. It is an opportunity to gain new skills and bring that knowledge home to help shape Fiji’s clean energy future.

Mr Chand is an Assistant Instructor in the Department of Electrical Engineering at FNU’s College of Engineering, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (CETVET). He has been selected for the highly competitive Postgraduate Diploma in Solar Systems

and Management at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi.

For one year, he will take part in the Solar Technology and Application Resource Centres (STAR-C) initiative, gaining advanced knowledge and practical experience in solar energy. The programme is supported by the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the European Union and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

“It is a profound honour and a humbling milestone to represent both the Fiji National University and our nation on a global platform. For me, this opportunity is a call to action. It empowers me to play a direct role in addressing the climate vulnerabilities and energy security challenges that countries like Fiji face every day,” Mr Chand said.

More than 70 per cent of the programme will involve laboratory work, simulations and hands-on training in solar energy, battery storage and renewable energy systems, as well as the financial, policy and regulatory aspects of renewable energy projects.

For Mr Chand, however, the real value of the opportunity lies in what he can bring back to Fiji.

“My primary goal is to share this experience to elevate FNU’s renewable energy curriculum. By integrating advanced simulation software and practical laboratory frameworks into our programmes, we can move our teaching from theory to hands-on, industry-standard practice,” he said.

He believes Fiji’s transition to renewable energy will require not only new technology, but also skilled engineers and technicians who can design, install and maintain these systems.

“By returning as a trainer under the International Solar Alliance STAR-C framework, I can help bridge Fiji’s current capacity gaps. Training local engineers and technicians will accelerate the deployment of reliable solar infrastructure, reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels and strengthen our nation’s energy security and climate resilience,” he stated.

Mr Chand also hopes FNU can develop a stronger local training platform to

produce generations of skilled solar professionals.

“Rather than relying on one-off training interventions, FNU can create a multiplier effect, educating generations of solar professionals who will continue driving Fiji’s energy transition and climate commitments,” Mr Chand reiterated.

His selection builds on the growing partnership between FNU and the International Solar Alliance. Earlier this month, FNU welcomed ISA Director General Ashish Khanna to its Derrick Campus to discuss further collaboration in renewable energy education, research and workforce development.

As Mr Chand prepares to begin his studies in India, his focus remains firmly on home. He hopes to return with knowledge that can strengthen FNU’s renewable energy programmes, support future engineers and technicians, and contribute to a cleaner and more resilient energy future for Fiji.

For Mr Chand, the journey to India is not just about what he will learn. It is about what he can bring home.

Ratu Inia: Leading Through Education and Service

By ROMEKA KUMARI

For Ratu Inia Tukere, the Tui Conua of the Tikina o Conua in Nadroga, Navosa, leadership is not simply about carrying the title of chief. It is about learning, listening and having the courage to make a difference.

The 37-year-old is among 28 young chiefs, or Sausauvou, from Fiji’s 14 provinces undertaking the Diploma in Vanua Leadership, developed by the Fiji National University’s (FNU) College of Humanities, Education and Law (CHEL).

Returning to the classroom has given Ratu Inia a new perspective on traditional leadership and how it can better respond to the needs of young people and communities.

“Being a chief is not only about leading people; it is about understanding their struggles, listening to their voices and finding ways to help them build a better future,” he said.

Ratu Inia succeeded his late father, Ratu Luke Veidovi, as Tui Conua in 2021. Before becoming a traditional leader, he spent a decade in the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, represented Fiji in sevens rugby in 2012 and later helped the Army team win the International Defence Rugby Competition in 2019.

He said the FNU’s Diploma in Vanua Leadership Programme has encouraged him to review village by-laws and consider how they can be strengthened to address social challenges.

“We must respect our traditions, but we must also be brave enough to make changes when those traditions can be strengthened to protect our children and our communities,” he added.

Ratu Inia has also been working with parents, elders and community members to encourage young people who have dropped out of school to return to education, including university and Technical and Vocational Education and



Ratu Inia Tukere.
Photo: Romeka Kumari

Training (TVET).

“There are young people in our villages who are loitering without direction. Instead of judging them, we must ask ourselves what we can do to help them. Education can open a door that they may have thought was already closed. For me, seeing a young person return to school, learn a trade or graduate from university is a greater achievement than simply seeing them follow me as a leader. My responsibility is to help them discover their own path,” Ratu Inia stated.

For Ratu Inia, the Vanua Leadership programme has strengthened his confidence to mentor others and shown him how traditional leadership can become a force for positive change.

“The mentoring, coaching and leadership skills I have learnt through this programme are tools that I can take back to my people. If I learn something that can improve the life of even one young person, then that knowledge has already served a purpose,” he said.

Ratu Inia believes leadership should be measured by the difference it makes in people’s lives.

“The true success of a chief is not in the title he carries, but in whether his people are happier, safer, educated and able to provide for their families. Knowledge gives us the courage to change. Leadership gives us the responsibility to act. If we combine the two, we can change the future of our people,” he elaborated.

As he continues his studies at FNU, Ratu Inia remains focused on using education to strengthen his leadership and help his people prosper.

From a Course Requirement to a Meaningful Journey

By ROMEKA KUMARI

What started as a requirement for a university course has become one of the most rewarding parts of Monika Sharma’s university journey.

The final-year Bachelor of Education (Primary) student at the Fiji National University’s (FNU) Labasa Campus first joined the university choir to fulfil the practical requirements of her Music unit. She soon found that being part of the choir was giving her much more than musical experience.

It helped her build confidence, learn to work with others and develop a deeper appreciation of Fiji’s different cultures.

“What began as a course requirement has turned into a very rewarding experience,”

Monika said.

For Monika, who is from Salusalu Street in Namara, Labasa, the choir has been a chance to develop her musical skills while also building her confidence. Through regular rehearsals and performances, she has become more comfortable performing in front of an audience.

“It was a great honour and a proud moment to perform at such an important event,” she added.

For Monika, performing traditional iTaukei songs was also an opportunity to learn about and appreciate another culture.

“As an Indo-Fijian, it was a wonderful opportunity to learn and perform iTaukei songs. Music brings people together regardless of their background, and I am proud to be part

of an activity that promotes unity, respect and cultural understanding,” Monika stated.

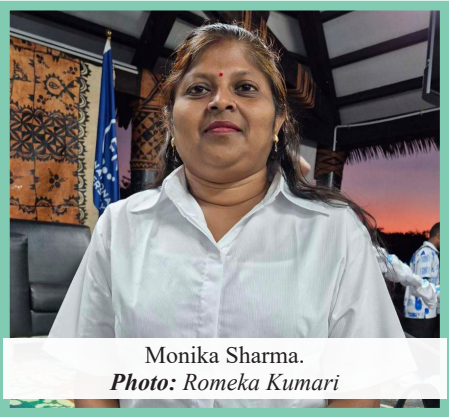
She further added that being part of the choir has also taught her the importance of teamwork.

“Every member plays an important role, and working together has strengthened my confidence and communication skills,” Monika said.

As she prepares for a career as a primary school teacher, Monika hopes to take these lessons with her into the classroom.

“I believe these values will help create inclusive and harmonious classrooms,” she reiterated.

For Monika, what started as a course requirement, has become a valuable part of her university journey, one that has helped her



Monika Sharma.
Photo: Romeka Kumari

grow in confidence, connect with others, and appreciate the cultural diversity that makes Fiji special.



The Permanent Secretary for National Planning, Development and Statistics Mr Peni Sikivou, FNU’s Vice-Chancellor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba and the FNU team at the opening of the FNU Northern Foundation Hub. **Photo: Peni Kolinisau**

More Than Just Music: Kushal's Journey with the FNU Choir

By **ROMEKA KUMARI**

For second-year Bachelor of Education (Primary) student Kushal Prasad, joining the Fiji National University (FNU) choir has been about much more than singing. As the choir’s only Indo-Fijian male member, Kushal has found friendship, built his confidence, and gained a deeper appreciation of Fiji’s different cultures through music. Hailing from Bulileka, Labasa, Kushal was among the students who performed traditional *iTaukei* songs, at the official opening of the FNU Foundation Northern Hub at the University’s Labasa Campus. For him, it was a meaningful and rewarding experience. “I have always had a strong passion for working with children and aspire to become a teacher, who positively influences students both academically and personally. At FNU, I have been developing my knowledge of teaching methodologies, while also gaining a deeper understanding of culture, leadership and community engagement,” he said. Joining the FNU choir gave Kushal the chance to step outside his comfort zone,

and become more involved in university life. “I joined the FNU choir to participate more fully in university life and challenge myself through a new experience. It has been an incredibly rewarding journey. I have built new friendships, strengthened my confidence, and learned the importance of teamwork and commitment in achieving shared goals. Every rehearsal has helped us grow stronger as a united group,” Kushal added. Performing at the official opening of the FNU Foundation Northern Hub was one of the highlights of his university journey. “It was a proud and memorable experience. Being part of such a significant event was a great honour. I felt excited before performing, and the positive response from the audience made all our efforts worthwhile. It is an experience I will always value,” he said. For Kushal, performing traditional *iTaukei* songs had a deeper meaning. As an Indo-Fijian, singing in the *iTaukei* language, gave him the opportunity to learn more about and appreciate another culture while celebrating Fiji’s diversity. “As an Indo-Fijian, performing



Kushal Prasad.
Photo: Romeka Kumari

iTaukei songs, was a deeply meaningful experience. It allowed me to appreciate and respect another culture, while celebrating the diversity that defines Fiji. Music has a unique ability to unite people beyond cultural boundaries, and I felt privileged to contribute to an event that promoted unity, respect and cultural appreciation,” he said. His time in the choir has also helped him better understand the importance of teamwork, and strengthened his appreciation of Fiji’s multicultural identity.

“My experience in the choir has taught me that, meaningful outcomes are achieved when individuals from diverse backgrounds come together with mutual respect and a shared purpose. I have learned that every member brings unique strengths, and through collaboration and support, we become a stronger and more effective team. This experience has further deepened my appreciation for Fiji’s multicultural identity and the value of unity,” Kushal said. As he prepares for a career in primary education, Kushal hopes to carry these lessons into his future classroom. “I believe music and cultural activities play an important role in creating an inclusive learning environment, where every child feels valued and accepted. They provide opportunities for students to learn about different traditions, build meaningful relationships, and develop respect for cultural diversity from an early age. As a future primary school teacher, I hope to incorporate music and cultural activities into my classroom, to encourage teamwork, understanding and a strong sense of belonging among all students,” he said. For Kushal, the FNU choir has been more than just a place to sing. It has given him the chance to meet new people, learn about different cultures, and be part of something bigger. Through music, he has found new friendships, greater confidence and a deeper appreciation of the diversity and unity that make Fiji special.

Litiana Refuses to Let Disability Define Her Dreams

By **ROMEKA KUMARI**

For 22-year-old Litiana Naikaua, disability has never been a reason to give up on her dreams. Born with a congenital foot disability, Litiana has continued to pursue her education, and is the first of seven siblings to attend university. Today, she is a second-year Bachelor of Education student, majoring in Primary Education, at the College of Humanities, Education and Law (CHEL), at Fiji National University’s newly named Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere Labasa Campus. The former Ratu Luke Secondary School student hails from Lutukina Village in Dreketi, Labasa, and currently lives with a relative at Saint

Mary’s Compound. As the eldest of seven siblings, Litiana has grown up with a strong sense of responsibility. But her determination to keep moving forward, has remained stronger than the challenges she has faced. “My disability is part of my journey, but it does not define who I am or what I can achieve,” she said. From a young age, Litiana dreamed of becoming a primary school teacher, and she has refused to let the difficulties along the way change that dream. “Sometimes the journey is difficult, but I remind myself that every step I take is bringing me closer to the future I have always dreamed of,” Litiana added. For Litiana, reaching university is more than a personal achievement. She hopes her journey will inspire her

younger siblings and other young people living with disabilities to believe that, their circumstances do not have to determine their future. “I want my siblings to look at me and believe, that they can also achieve their dreams. I want them to know that where you come from or the challenges you face, should never decide how far you can go,” she elaborated. Her goal is to graduate, become a qualified primary school teacher and inspire children to believe in themselves. “I have faced challenges, but I have never allowed them to stop me from pursuing my dreams. I want my journey to show others that, no matter what challenges they face, they can keep going, believe in themselves and achieve what they set out to do,” Litiana



Litiana Naikaua.
Photo: Romeka Kumari

reiterated. For Litiana, the road to a dream may not always be easy, but nothing is impossible when the heart is willing and you refuse to give up. She hopes her story will encourage others to keep believing in themselves, keep moving forward and never allow their challenges to convince them that, their dreams are out of reach.



Ashneel Maharaj.
Photo: Christal Kapoor

By CHRISTAL KAPOOR

For 22-year-old Ashneel Maharaj, becoming an aircraft engineer, is about more than building a career. It is about following a dream, overcoming challenges and keeping a promise to someone who believed in him.

The final-year Certificate in Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (Mechanical) student at the Fiji National University’s (FNU)

Pacific Centre for Aviation Studies (PCAS), left his family in Suva to pursue a career he had dreamed about from a young age. Moving away from home meant, learning to manage life on his own while keeping up with his studies.

“Moving away from home wasn’t easy. I had to learn everything, from cooking and doing my own laundry to managing my time. It wasn’t always easy, but it helped me become more independent and responsible,” Ashneel said.

His interest in aircraft started when he was young, and aviation soon became the career he wanted to pursue.

“I have never regretted choosing this field of study,” he said.

But behind Ashneel’s determination is a personal story that has given his dream even more meaning. His girlfriend, who has since passed away, once told him that she wanted to see him graduate, as an aircraft engineer.

“My girlfriend, who is sadly no longer with us, once told me she wanted to see me graduate as an aircraft engineer. That is what keeps me

going on my lowest days. I want to make that dream come true. Her words have stayed with me throughout my studies and it continues to encourage me, when things get difficult,” he expressed emotionally.

Ashneel hopes to begin his career with Fiji Airways, before eventually exploring opportunities with international airlines, such as Qantas. He wants to continue learning, gain experience and build a career in the aviation industry.

But his journey has also given him a desire to help other young people find their own path. As one of the student ambassadors at the recent CAAF–FNU Beyond the Skies Open Day, Ashneel met hundreds of secondary school students and visitors. He shared his experience and encouraged them to learn more about the different career opportunities available in aviation.

“I was really happy to help students learn more about aviation. Many young people don’t choose this field simply because, they

don’t know enough about the different career opportunities available. I hope events like this encourage more students to follow their passion,” he added.

Ashneel believes that learning about different careers early, can help young people make better choices about their future.

“Having good knowledge about the career you want to pursue, is always an advantage, especially when you’re young,” he reiterated.

As graduation gets closer, Ashneel can look back on how much he has changed. Leaving home taught him to be independent, while his studies have given him the skills and confidence to work towards his dream.

For Ashneel, becoming an aircraft engineer will be a proud achievement. It will also mean keeping a promise to someone who believed in him, and showing other young people that their dreams are worth working for.

The young boy who once dreamed of working with aircraft, is now one step closer to making that dream a reality.

From Dreaming of Flying to Building a Career in Aviation

By CHRISTAL KAPOOR

At 22, Ilisapeci Saini Rasolo is taking a different path from the one, she once imagined.

As a young girl, she dreamed of becoming a pilot. Today, she is working towards becoming an aircraft engineer, pursuing a Certificate in Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (Avionics) at the Fiji National University’s (FNU) Pacific Centre for Aviation Studies (PCAS).

Originally from Lau, Ilisapeci comes from a family with strong ties to aviation, with several relatives working as flight attendants. But instead of following the same path, she decided to explore a different side of the industry.

“I just felt that I was called to be different and to start a new trend in my family. Today, I am on the path to becoming the first aircraft engineer in my family,” Ilisapeci said.

For Ilisapeci, aircraft engineering has become more than just a career choice. It is a field she enjoys and a challenge she is determined to take on.

As a final-year student, she spends her time learning more about aircraft systems, avionics

and aviation technology.

She also credits her lecturer and mentor, Mr Abraar Khan, for supporting her throughout her studies.

“Mr Khan has been there for me since day one. He has been a great mentor, and advisor and, has helped shape my educational journey immensely. I am so grateful to have him as my lecturer, because I learn something new from him every day,” she said.

Aircraft engineering has traditionally been a male-dominated field, but Ilisapeci wants to help change that.

“My mission to dismantle negative perceptions and stereotypes about women in engineering, is what keeps me going,” Ilisapeci added.

Her confidence grew further through her industrial attachments. She spent six months with Northern Air, and another six months with Fiji Airways, gaining practical experience and working alongside experienced aviation professionals.

During her attachment with Fiji Airways, she noticed that there were still very few women working as aircraft engineers.

“During my attachment at Fiji Airways, I noticed there were only about five female engineers. I hope that one day, I can inspire more girls to join this field, and help change that statistic,” she stated.

For Ilisapeci, the attachments were about more than learning technical skills. They also taught her how to manage the demands of working in the aviation industry.

“I learned so much about avionics, maintaining a healthy work-life balance, and managing my time while working shifts. I had the opportunity to work with massive aircraft engines, and learn from some of the best professionals in the industry. It was truly a life-changing experience, and I am grateful that FNU ensures students gain practical industry experience, before graduation,” said Ilisapeci.

The experience has also helped Ilisapeci think about what she wants for her future. She hopes to begin her career with Fiji Airways or Kokomo Private Island, before eventually returning to FNU as a lecturer in aircraft engineering. Having benefited from the guidance of her own mentor, she hopes to one day, do the same for others.



Ilisapeci Saini Rasolo.
Photo Credit: Christal Kapoor

“Just as Mr Khan inspired me, I hope to one day inspire other young people to pursue careers in aircraft engineering, and show them that anything is possible, if you are willing to work hard,” she reiterated.

Ilisapeci is already breaking new ground in her family by pursuing a career in aircraft engineering. She hopes her journey will also encourage more young women, to consider aviation and engineering as career options.

Her dream may have changed from flying an aircraft, to helping keep one safely in the sky, but her determination to succeed has remained the same.



Ratu Tevita Isaac Mara Tubailagi Latianara.
Photo: Christal Kapoor

For Ratu Tevita Isaac Mara Tubailagi Latianara, the excitement of attending the CAAF–FNU Beyond the Skies Aviation Open Day, was so great that he could barely sleep the night before.

The Year 13 Technical Science student from Queen Victoria School (QVS), has long dreamed of becoming an aircraft engineer.

Originally from Serua Island, Ratu Tevita

travelled from Tailevu to Nadi for the Open Day, a journey he says he will never forget.

“I have always been fascinated by fixing things, and that sparked my interest in engineering. Aircraft engineering seemed like the perfect career because, it combines problem-solving with technology,” he said.

For Ratu Tevita, the opportunity to attend the Open Day brought him one step closer to understanding the career he hopes to pursue.

“The Open Day was eye-opening, and the excitement was worth it. I am so grateful to the mothers who came together and paid for the transport to bring me and my friends to Nadi, for this opportunity,” Ratu Tevita added.

Ratu Tevita said the support and sacrifices made by QVS parents, particularly mothers, play an important role in helping students pursue their goals, while balancing the demands of school and sport.

“The support we receive from our parents, especially our mothers, means everything. Balancing academics and sports can be challenging, but knowing they believe in us, motivates us to keep striving for success,” he further added.

Although his own mother was unable to accompany him to the event, Ratu Tevita said he was grateful to be supported by the mothers of his fellow students.

“Even though my mother couldn’t be here with me today, I am grateful that the mothers of my fellow brothers, made it possible for me to attend. I know my mother is proud that I am chasing my dream,” Ratu Tevita said.

The aspiring aircraft engineer now hopes to continue his education at the Fiji National University’s Pacific Centre for Aviation Studies (PCAS), and one day build a career in the aviation industry. For him, attending the Open

Day was more than just an opportunity to learn about aircraft and engineering. It gave him a clearer picture of the future he wants.

He also had a message for younger students who hope to follow a similar path.

“Work hard and stay focused on your dreams. Whenever you can attend an Open Day or learn more about a career you are interested in, take it. Ask as many questions as you can, because it will help you make informed decisions about your future,” he emphasised.

For Ratu Tevita, the journey to Nadi was only one step, but it was a step towards a dream he has carried for years.

The young QVS student who could barely sleep the night before the Open Day, now has an even clearer picture of where he wants his future to take him, which is into the world of aircraft engineering.

Day Zero Talanoa Dialogue sets the stage at NCIT 2026

By CHRISTAL KAPOOR

The conversations that shape the future often begin long before the main event. Ahead of the official opening of the 7th National Conference on Information Technology (NCIT) 2026, the Fiji National University (FNU), in partnership with the Internet Society (ISOC), brought together regional experts for a Talanoa Dialogue on an issue that affects communities across the Pacific, having an Internet that people can rely on.

Held at the Shangri-La Yanuca Island, the “Taking the Pulse of the Pacific’s Internet Resilience” workshop, brought together policymakers, researchers, technical experts, network operators and digital advocates to discuss how Pacific Island countries can build a more secure, inclusive and reliable Internet.

The Day Zero dialogue provided an open space, to share experiences, exchange ideas and identify research priorities for collaborative Internet resilience projects between 2027 and 2030.

Bringing the Pacific Together Through Talanoa

Welcoming participants, FNU Pro-Vice-Chancellor TVET Pasifika and NTPC Director, Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata said, the dialogue reflected the Pacific tradition of coming together, sharing experiences and finding solutions.

“Technology may connect our devices, but it is dialogue that connects our people,” Dr Tagicakiverata said.

He said talanoa was about building trust, listening to different perspectives, and finding solutions that made sense for Pacific communities.

The discussions also reflected this year’s NCIT theme, “From Vanua to Virtual: People, Trust and Technology Driving a Secure, Trusted and Productive Digital Pacific,” highlighting the importance of keeping Pacific



Pro Vice Chancellor TVET Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata delivering his address at the talanoa. *Photo: Christal Kapoor*

values and communities at the centre of the region’s digital journey.

Why Internet Resilience Matters

Reliable Internet access can help students continue learning, keep families connected, support businesses and health services, and provide critical information during emergencies.

However, connectivity is only part of the challenge.

Participants discussed issues affecting Internet resilience across the Pacific, including geographical isolation, climate-related disasters, infrastructure limitations and unequal connectivity. They also explored how Internet measurement data can help governments and organisations make better decisions about infrastructure, policies and digital services.

Dr Tagicakiverata said, reliable Internet connectivity was now essential to almost every part of modern life.

“It supports education, healthcare, government services, business, research and emergency response. When the internet fails,

the impact can be felt across all these areas,” he said.

Access Is Not the Same as Resilience

Referring to the latest Internet Society Pulse data, Dr Tagicakiverata noted that 75 per cent of Fiji’s population uses the Internet, while 96 per cent have access to at least one 4G-enabled device.

However, Fiji’s Internet Resilience score stands at 51 out of 100, while its infrastructure score is just 33 out of 100.

“Access and resilience are not the same thing. Having access to a device or a network, does not always mean having a connection that is reliable and resilient, when we need it most,” he said.

Ms Seruwaia Rokolatu of Maxumise said, the dialogue gave her a better understanding of the challenges people face when accessing online services, particularly in rural communities.

“It was both interesting and educational. People shared their perspectives on Internet connectivity in rural communities, and the challenges faced by countries like Fiji, including infrastructure, climate and human resource constraints,” Ms Rokolatu said.

She said the discussion also encouraged her to look more closely at the online platforms used by her organisation.

“I will return to my workplace with new ideas to help improve our digital platforms so that people, regardless of where they live, can access and use our online services more effectively,” she said.

The Role of Universities

The dialogue also highlighted the role of universities in addressing digital challenges through research, innovation and education.

Dr Tagicakiverata reaffirmed FNU’s commitment to preparing future ICT professionals, through programmes in cybersecurity, networking, cloud computing, information security and digital technologies.

He also highlighted FNU’s contribution to UNESCO’s practical guide, on integrating Artificial Intelligence into Technical and Vocational Education and Training, demonstrating the growing contribution of Pacific Institutions, to global conversations on technology, education and the future of work.

Building a Digital Pacific Together

As the Day Zero dialogue concluded, one message was clear - the Pacific’s digital future cannot be built by technology alone.

It will require people working together, sharing knowledge, using research to guide decisions, and ensuring digital services work for everyone, including those living in remote communities.

The discussions have now set the stage for NCIT 2026, where policymakers, researchers, industry leaders and members of the Internet governance community will continue the conversation about building a more secure, trusted and productive digital Pacific.



Seruwaia Rokolatu of Maxumise at the NCIT 2026. *Photo: Christal Kapoor*

Calem Adrian: AI Is a Tool, Not a Shortcut



Calem Adrian. *Photo: Christal Kapoor*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the way people work, learn and create. While its rapid growth has raised questions and concerns, young technology professional Calem Adrian, believes the better approach is to learn how to use AI responsibly rather than fear it.

Mr Adrian, an IT Consultant with Duco Consultancy and an attendee at the National Conference on Information Technology (NCIT), said people should embrace AI while understanding its limitations and using it responsibly.

“AI is becoming part of our everyday lives, just as the internet did years ago. When the

internet first came out, many people were sceptical. Today, we cannot imagine life without it. AI is following a similar path, and conferences like the NCIT are important because, they help people understand how to use it responsibly,” he said.

Creativity Still Begins with People

Mr Adrian believes human creativity will remain at the heart of creative industries, such as music, art and design.

“You cannot replace the beauty of music that has been created by an artist. At the same time, there is creativity in AI-generated music because someone still has to write the lyrics, develop the ideas and provide the emotion behind it. If there is no heart behind the words, people simply will not connect with the music,” he said.

He also stressed the importance of respecting the work of others when using AI.

“If you want to use someone else’s music or creative work through AI, the first step is to ask for permission. We need to be careful about how we use AI. It should support creativity, not take advantage of someone else’s talent,” he said.

AI Is a Tool, Not a Shortcut

With AI becoming increasingly popular among students, Mr Adrian encouraged young

people not to rely on it to do their work for them.

“Don’t use AI to write your entire paper or give you every answer. AI can make mistakes, so you should never rely on it completely. You still need to check the information, use reliable sources and make your own decisions,” he advised.

Instead, he encouraged students to use AI as a learning tool.

“You can use AI ethically to help you find sources, explain concepts or organise your ideas, but you still need to do your own research and think critically,” he said.

Think Before You Share

Mr Adrian also urged users to think carefully about the information they share with AI tools.

“Be mindful of what you enter into AI tools. Avoid sharing sensitive information, and always think about your privacy,” he said.

Using AI at Work

At Duco Consultancy, Mr Adrian specialises in Microsoft Dynamics and Microsoft Azure cloud technologies, and uses AI as part of his daily work.

“I use AI every day to help generate code, and solve problems, but I never just copy and paste the results. I always review and validate what AI produces, before using it. That’s the

responsible way to work with AI,” he said.

Mr Adrian also said, Duco Consultancy also encourages staff to explore AI tools to improve productivity and support innovation.

“We have to move with the times. AI is here to stay, and organisations need to learn how to use it effectively,” he said.

Encouraging the Next Generation

Having attended NCIT as a student several years ago, Mr Adrian said returning as an industry professional, reminded him of the importance of continuing to learn and gain experience.

“You don’t have to know everything before you begin. Start somewhere, build your confidence through experience and keep learning. That’s how you grow in the technology industry,” Mr Adrian stated.

For students considering a career in IT, he encouraged them to build strong foundations in English, Mathematics and Computing while staying curious about new technologies.

“You will never know everything in technology, because it is always changing. What matters is being willing to learn and adapt,” he said.

For Mr Adrian, the message is simple. AI is a powerful tool, but its real value depends on how responsibly people choose to use it.

Father and Son Graduate Together, Turning Skills into a Shared Dream

By WATI TALEBULA

At 69, Ratunaisa Wakanimolikula has shown that it is never too late to learn something new. For him, returning to the classroom was made even more special by graduating alongside his 34-year-old son, Ratunaisa Wakanimolikula Junior.

The father and son graduated in Demonstrate Fibreglass Boat Repair through Fiji National University’s (FNU) National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) Community-Based Non-Formal Education Programme, at Sila village in Cuvu, Nadroga, on Friday 21 August.

For Mr Wakanimolikula Senior, the graduation was a return to tertiary education more than 40 years, after his first graduation. He graduated from the then Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) in 1980 after completing a hotelier course.

“After all these years, I am happy to graduate again, and this time I have my son graduating with me,” he said.

This time, however, he was not returning to study alone. Learning alongside his son, gave the experience a special meaning.

“We want to buy a boat and practise what we have learned. We also want to start a business together,” Mr Wakanimolikula Senior said.

For Mr Wakanimolikula Junior, graduating with his father was an emotional and unforgettable moment. It was his first tertiary graduation, and



Ratunaisa Wakanimolikula Senior with his son, Ratunaisa Wakanimolikula Junior with their Certificates at Sila village in Cuvu Nadroga.

Photo: Wati Talebula

having his father beside him, made it even more meaningful.

“I feel very emotional because, I never thought I would graduate with my dad beside me. This is something I will always remember,” he said.

After completing Year 12, Mr Wakanimolikula Junior began working as a carpenter. The boat repair training has now given him another practical skill, that he hopes to use with his father.

“I started working as a carpenter after Year 12, but now I have learned something new. I want to use these skills

and work together with my dad,” added Mr Wakanimolikula Junior.

The pair now hope to buy a boat, put their new skills into practice, and eventually start their own business.

“For us, this is not just about getting a certificate. We want to use the knowledge we have gained to do something for ourselves, and build a business together,” Mr Wakanimolikula Junior explained.

For Mr Wakanimolikula Senior, seeing his son graduate beside him, was a proud moment.

“I am proud that my son graduated

with me. Now we can take what we have learned, and build something together,” Mr Wakanimolikula Senior emotionally stated.

Their story is a simple reminder that it is never too late to learn, and that sometimes the best learning journey is one shared with someone you love.

For this father and son, graduation is not the end. It is the start of a new journey, together.

At 16, Luisani Graduates with Her Mum and Dreams of a Business

By WATI TALEBULA

At just 16, Luisani Rosilomani Qalomai is already thinking about her future.

For her, graduation is even more special because she shared the journey with her mother, Adi Kakua Silovate.

The mother and daughter were among 365 graduates of Fiji National University’s (FNU) National Training and Productivity Centre’s (NTPC) Community-Based Non-Formal Education Programme, at Sila village in Cuvu, Nadroga.

The cohort included 188 women, highlighting the growing participation of women, in gaining practical and vocational skills that can create new opportunities.

Originally from Banikea in Bua, with maternal links to Vatukarasa in Nadroga, Luisani is the second eldest of four siblings.

For the young graduate, completing her Cookery qualification is about more than receiving a certificate. It is about gaining skills she can use, to help her family and, one day, build a business with her mother.

“I am very happy that I graduated with my mum. We learned together, and now we can use the skills we have gained to start something of our own,” Luisani said.

Learning alongside her mother made the experience even more meaningful for Luisani. They were able to support each other, learn together and share the challenges and successes that came with the training.

Through the Cookery Programme, the pair learned to prepare a range of food, including pizzas, burgers, hot dogs and English, Chinese and Italian dishes.

“We have learned how to make different types of food. We can make pizza, burgers and hot dogs, and we also learned how to prepare English, Chinese and Italian dishes,” she said.

For Luisani, the training was not just cooking, as it also helped build her confidence, and given her a clearer idea of what she wants to do in the future.

“I want to continue learning and improve my skills. I also want to use what I have learned to help my family, and eventually start a business with my mum,” she added.

Her mother shares the same vision and believes learning together, has been a valuable experience for both of them.

“We are planning to start a business together. Learning with my daughter was a very good experience because we were able to support each other,” Ms Silovate said.

The mother and daughter now hope to turn their new skills into something they can build together. While they are still deciding what their business will look like, they believe the skills they have gained are a good starting point.

For Luisani, graduation is only the beginning. At 16, she is already looking ahead, determined to keep learning, strengthen her skills and explore new opportunities.

With her mother by her side, she hopes to turn what they have learned into something, that can support their family, and give them a future they can be proud of.

“I want our business to grow in the future. I want to keep learning, gain more experience, and make my mum proud,” Luisani reiterated.

Their story shows how practical education can inspire young people to dream, while giving families the skills and confidence to create new opportunities.

For Luisani and her mother, what started as a learning experience, has grown into a shared goal, one that they hope will take them from graduation to a business of their own.



16-year-old Luisani Rosilomani Qalomai and her mother Adi Kakua Silovate at the FNU’s National Training and Productivity Centre’s graduation. Photo: Wati Talebula

From FNU Student to Entrepreneur: Krishan Returns to Where It All Began

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

For Krishan Narayan, returning to the Fiji National University’s (FNU) Ba Campus was a special moment. Years ago, he was a student at the campus with a passion for engineering and farming. During the Ba Campus Inaugural Market Day, he returned as an entrepreneur, sharing his experience and supporting current FNU students.

Mr Narayan, Director of Krishans Farm Implements, was among 17 stakeholders who took part in the inaugural FNU Ba Campus Market Day, at the end of July.

The initiative, established by FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, aims to support students through the University’s charitable arm, the FNU Foundation, while giving students an opportunity to showcase their talents, ideas and creativity.

Students and staff from FNU’s College of Engineering, Technical Vocational Education and Training (CETVET), College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF), the FNU Foundation and the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC), also supported the event.

For Mr Narayan, the Market Day was a reminder of his own journey, and how his education helped him, turn his interests into a career.

After completing his Certificate in Automotive Engineering at FNU’s Ba Campus in 2014, he returned to the family farm and worked alongside his father. He began looking for ways to



Students and staff from CETVET displaying items on sale at the FNU Ba Campus Market Day.
Photo: Aaron Fatiaki

use his technical knowledge to support farming. That experience eventually inspired him to start his own business.

“After graduating, I combined my expertise with my father’s experience and my passion for farming to start a business, and this is where I am today,” he said.

Today, Krishans Farm Implements, supplies a range of agricultural machinery and equipment to farmers, including rotavators, weeder machines, earth augers, water pumps, irrigation materials and tractor implements.

For Mr Narayan, the business brings together the skills he gained at FNU, the knowledge he learned from his father, and his passion for farming. His

journey is also a simple example of how education and passion, can lead to new opportunities.

The Head of Campus–Ba, Niraj Dharmendra, said the Market Day gave students an opportunity to discover their potential, and gain experience outside the classroom.

“In recognising the potential of the students at FNU’s Ba Campus, Professor Nabobo-Baba envisioned a platform, where students could showcase their talents, bring their ideas to life and gain valuable experiences beyond the classroom,” said Mr Dharmendra.

He added that the initiative also supports students through the FNU Foundation, which continues to assist

those who need support to pursue their education.

The Chief Guest and Special Administrator for the Ba Town Council, Moshim Khan, said FNU played an important role in giving students opportunities to develop their skills and pursue their goals.

“What we witness here today is the power of education in action. It is proof that, when we nurture curiosity and passion, we empower young people to become not just graduates, but leaders, creators and entrepreneurs who will shape the future of our nation,” Mr Khan said.

He added that the support from students and stakeholders, created a space where ideas could be shared and opportunities explored.

“The Market Day is a platform where imagination meets opportunity and an exhibition,” Mr Khan reiterated.

Held under the theme “Celebrating Students’ Passion and Creativity,” the inaugural FNU Ba Campus Market Day featured live music, fresh fruits and vegetables, homemade food and pastries, handcrafted items and a variety of other products.

For Mr Narayan, returning to the campus where his journey began, was a chance to look back on how far he has come, and to show current students that the skills they gain at FNU can lead to many different opportunities.

His journey from an FNU student to a farming entrepreneur, is a reminder that when education, passion and hard work come together, they can open the door to something bigger.



FNU staff and students following the Vernacular Week celebration at Natabua Campus. *Photo: Nicolette Chambers*

FNU Celebrates Fiji’s Languages and Cultures Through Vernacular Week

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

The sounds, languages and cultures of Fiji came alive at the Fiji National University’s (FNU) Natabua Campus in Lautoka last week, as students came together for the inaugural Vernacular Week.

Hosted by FNU’s College of Humanities, Education and Law (CHEL), the week-long event was held as part of the global observance of the fourth year of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

The event, which was chaired by Assistant Professor at FNU’s School of Education under CHEL, Dr Kasanita Nayasi, gave students and staff an opportunity to share their language

skills, cultural knowledge and creativity.

“The event provided students and staff with opportunities to showcase their language skills, cultural knowledge and creativity through a range of educational and cultural activities. Language plays an important role in keeping culture and identity alive,” Dr Nayasi said.

She added that through the activities, the Vernacular Week encouraged a greater appreciation of Fiji’s multilingual heritage, and reinforced the important role that vernacular languages play in preserving cultural identity.

“The week-long programme encouraged students to use their languages with confidence while developing greater respect and appreciation for

Fiji’s different communities. It also supported FNU’s commitment to inclusivity, cultural awareness and student engagement by encouraging students to take part in activities beyond the classroom,” elaborated Dr Nayasi.

The Vernacular Week, was a celebration of Fiji’s cultural diversity and an opportunity for students and staff to come together in recognising the value of our indigenous languages.

“The week also served as a reminder that language is an important part of who we are. It carries our stories, traditions, knowledge and identity from one generation to the next. Through the Vernacular Week, FNU is creating a space where Fiji’s languages can be

heard, shared and appreciated, while encouraging students to take pride in the cultures and traditions that make Fiji unique,” Dr Nayasi reiterated.

For students, the week was an opportunity to use their mother tongues in academic, creative and cultural settings, to share their languages, celebrate their cultures and learn more about the different communities that make up Fiji.

The programme included poetry recitals, original songs, debates, visual arts, seminar presentations in vernacular languages, karaoke, original vernacular song performances and cultural performances representing Fiji’s diverse language communities.

Health & Hustle

New KOICA–FNU Simulation Centre to Prepare Fiji's Next Generation of Health Professionals

By Wati Talebula

The opening of the KOICA–FNU Simulation Centre at the Fiji National University's (FNU) Pasifika Campus, is an important step forward for healthcare education in Fiji.

Supported through the Republic of Korea's Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) Educational Capacity Building Project, the US\$9.8 million, five-year initiative, is helping FNU improve simulation-based learning, modern teaching methods, curriculum development and research.

For FNU's College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS), the Centre is about giving students a safe place to learn, practise their skills and build confidence before they work with real patients.

The Acting Dean of CMNHS, Dr Amelia Turagabeci, said the Centre would help students make a stronger connection between what they learn in the classroom, and what they experience in clinical settings.

"This is not simply about having a new building or new equipment. It is about creating an environment where our students can learn, practise, receive feedback and build confidence before they are placed in situations involving real patients," Dr Turagabeci said.

Through simulation-based learning, students can work through realistic clinical situations in a safe and controlled environment. They can practise their skills, make decisions, communicate with others and learn from their mistakes without putting patients at risk.

"Students can experience a scenario, respond to it, receive feedback, reflect on what they have done and then try again. That repetition is incredibly valuable because competence and confidence are developed through practice," added Dr Turagabeci.

The Centre will also help prepare students before they begin clinical placements in hospitals, and other healthcare facilities. Students from medicine, nursing, dentistry, physiotherapy and other allied health programmes, will have opportunities to learn and practise together, reflecting the way healthcare teams work in real life.

"Healthcare is delivered by teams. It is important that our students understand not only their own professional responsibilities, but also how their role connects with the roles of other members of the healthcare team," she said.



Prime Minister Honourable Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka during the groundbreaking ceremony for the US\$9.8 million KOICA-FNU Simulation Centre at Fiji National University's (FNU) Pasifika Campus. **Photo:** Luke Salababa Sautu

The Centre is equipped with advanced simulation mannequins, digital technologies and virtual learning platforms that allow educators to recreate different clinical situations, and see how students respond.

But for Dr Turagabeci, the technology itself is not the main point.

"The technology is a tool. The real transformation happens when we use that technology effectively, to strengthen teaching, assessment, research and professional development," she reiterated.

The Centre will give FNU more opportunities to make clinical teaching and assessment practical and consistent, while allowing students to practise more before they work with patients.

The KOICA partnership also goes beyond the Centre itself. It supports curriculum development, staff training and research, helping FNU build the skills and expertise needed, to make simulation-based education a lasting part of healthcare training.

Academic staff are receiving specialised training in simulation-based teaching, and curriculum design. This will help build local expertise, that can continue to support students and the wider health sector in the

years ahead.

"We want this Centre to leave behind lasting educational capacity. That means developing our staff, strengthening our curricula and building our research capability so that simulation-based education, becomes embedded in what we do," Dr Turagabeci highlighted.

The investment comes at an important time as Fiji continues to build and strengthen its healthcare workforce. Graduates who are better prepared for clinical practice, can contribute to safer care and better health services for people across the country.

"This investment is ultimately about the future of healthcare. If we can prepare our students better, support our health professionals to continue learning and build the capacity of our educators, then the benefits will extend far beyond the walls of this Centre," she said.

While the Centre is focused on healthcare education in Fiji, it also has the potential to support other Pacific countries through professional training, staff development, research and regional partnerships.

"Our immediate responsibility is to strengthen healthcare education for

Fiji, but we also have an opportunity to share what we develop with our Pacific neighbours. The long-term vision is for this to contribute to regional capacity, expertise and collaboration," said Dr Turagabeci.

For Dr Turagabeci, the real measure of the Centre's success will not be the building or the technology, but the healthcare professionals it helps produce.

"Success will be when, our graduates are not only knowledgeable, but clinically capable, confident, reflective and able to work effectively with others. The building is important, but the people we develop through it are, what will define its legacy," she elaborated.

The KOICA–FNU Simulation Centre is an investment in FNU's students, educators and the future of healthcare.

By giving students more opportunities to practise, learn from their experiences and work as part of a team, the Centre is helping prepare a safer, more confident and better-equipped healthcare workforce for Fiji and the wider Pacific.

INSIDE FNU is a monthly newspaper which aims to promote the University's activities to the wider community. This newsletter is produced by the Public Relations and Communications team at the Division of Marketing and Communications.

Publisher: Fiji National University
Editor: Manager Public Relations and Communications, Fulori Turaga.
Design & Layout: Luke Salababa Sautu
Division Head: Director Marketing and Communications, Ella K. Bennion
Writers: Christal Kapoor, Wati Talebula, Nicloette Chambers, Romeka Kumari.

INSIDE FNU wants to HEAR FROM YOU

INSIDE FNU welcomes submissions by staff and students for publication in the newsletter. Please send your suggestions, comments or articles for consideration to mprc@fnu.ac.fj

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