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*Press Release*

## **Tertiary pioneer relives first university memories**

Fijian tertiary education pioneer and outgoing University of Fiji Vice Chancellor, Professor Srivinasiah Muralidhar was yesterday (Tuesday) given a fitting retirement farewell from the same spot he helped start up Fiji's first but short lived university, almost 50 years ago.

Students, teachers and parents gathered at yesterday's farewell at Waidalice Primary School in Tailevu, where the first building of the university still stands. It was at the exact same spot that Professor Muralidhar started his career in Fiji in 1965 after arriving from India the same year.

Professor Muralidhar is the first and only surviving staff member of the university, established by the Rama Krishna Mission and named Vivekananda University College. The University was closed after only a year in operation, due to lack of funds.

Professor Muralidhar said he came to Fiji after applying for the position advertised in India's *The Hindu* newspaper.

His farewell was organised by the Fiji National University.

Recalling his pioneering tertiary education efforts of 46 years ago, Professor Muralidhar said there were a lot of difficulties with running Fiji's first university.

"I used to teach Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics," he said.

He said it was heart breaking to see the university close after one year.

Professor Muralidhar then went to teach at Swami Vivekananda College for 6 years.

He then joined the University of the South Pacific and stayed there until 2006 when he was appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Fiji.

Speaking at the farewell, Fiji National University Vice Chancellor, Dr Ganesh Chand said the site could be listed as a heritage building.

"This University started before Fulton College and was recognized by the University of London," he said.

Dr Chand said university education began in Tailveu, something Tailevu people must be proud of.

He said there was a book being written by Professor Muralidhar on tertiary education in Fiji.

Now a Fiji citizen, Professor Muralidhar said he will be going to India in January for a short visit following his retirement in December and will maintain close ties with the University of Fiji.

**For more information, Professor Muralidhar can be contacted on 9462756 or [muralidharfiji@gmail.com](mailto:muralidharfiji@gmail.com)**