

## Proud Qutanilaba wins Progressive Female Deck Cadet Award at World Maritime Day celebrations



Sainimere Qutanilaba, receives her award from the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services, Hon Jone Usamate.

It was a momentous occasion for Sainimere Qutanilaba, an alumna of Fiji National University's (FNU) Fiji Maritime Academy (FMA), after winning the Progressive Female Deck Cadet Award during the World Maritime Day 2019 (WMD) celebrations held in Suva today.

Originally from the village of Savudrodoro in Savusavu, Qutanilaba said she was 'over the moon' after receiving the recognition award from the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services, Honourable Jone Usamate.

Qutanilaba was amongst eight women recognised in different categories during the celebrations at Sukuna Park this morning. The theme for WMD 2019 is 'Empowering Women in the Maritime Community' and the Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF) to mark the contribution of women in the Maritime Sector organised an Awards ceremony.

The young Deck Watch Rating at Goundar Shipping Limited said the award came as a surprise to her and she acknowledged FMA and her employer for moulding her with skills necessary in order to succeed in this industry.

"While in high school, whenever I got the opportunity to go to FNU's Open Days, I would spend as much time as I could in the FMA booth trying to gather all the required information to get entry in the programme and I am glad I made the decision of having this career," said Qutanilaba.

"I am grateful to Goundar Shipping Limited for giving women like me a chance to work in the organisation and prove to all that we women can excel in any career."



(L-R) Sainimere Qutanilaba poses for a picture with FMA CEO Mahesa Abeynayake and her father Taniela Qutanilaba at Sukuna Park in Suva.

Qutanilaba enrolled at FMA in 2011 and described her learning experiences as 'challenging but rewarding.'

"We all know this is male-dominated sector, hence, there were only a few of us females in one classroom full of men. It was difficult to at times to match their energy level and we used to shy away from certain things." "As the course progressed, I realised that the desire to be like them is actually driving me to do better than them, which eventually got me through the course," said elated Qutanilaba.

The 26-year-old plans to undertake an examination with MSAF to progress further in her career.

Earlier this year, Qutanilaba was commended for breaking boundaries in the maritime sector when she assisted Captain Inoke Ratotodro pilot Goundar Shipping Limited's Lomaiviti Princess VII (7) from Japan to Fiji, a journey which lasted two weeks.

Her father, Taniela Qutanilaba was beaming with pride following her daughter's accomplishments in an industry where women are underrepresented.

"I wanted her to join the medical profession, however, she decided to join the maritime industry. This is when I advised her that her choice of profession matters the most because it will be something that she will do every day and she needs to be happy while doing that," said Qutanilaba.

FMA Chief Executive Officer, Mahesa Abeynayake said it was a proud moment for the institution to witness former female students being recognised at the national level.

He said Qutanilaba's achievement will inspire other females to pursue a profession in the Maritime Industry.

"I would proudly and confidently send our female cadets to any interviews. I feel they are far ahead than men intellectually and discipline wise as well."

"They always try to do better than the males, which makes them excel in their fields," Abeynayake added.

FMA students participated in the march from the Suva Flea Market to Sukuna Park and conducted inflatable life raft exercise for visitors during the celebrations today.