

## FNU updates Indian delegation on IT Centre progress



Her Excellency High Commissioner of India to Fiji Smt. Padmaja, Ministry of External Affairs Joint Secretary Dr Devyani Khobragade and FNU VC Prof Nigel Healey.

The Fiji National University (FNU) received a delegation from the High Commission of India recently to discuss the growth of the Mahatma Gandhi Centre of Excellence in Information Technology (MG-CEIT), which was established at the FNU Samabula Campus with the assistance of the Government of India.

MG-CEIT is the result of a Memorandum of Understanding that was signed in 2017 between the governments of Fiji and India for the progress of developing information, communications and technology (ICT) education and human resources in Fiji.

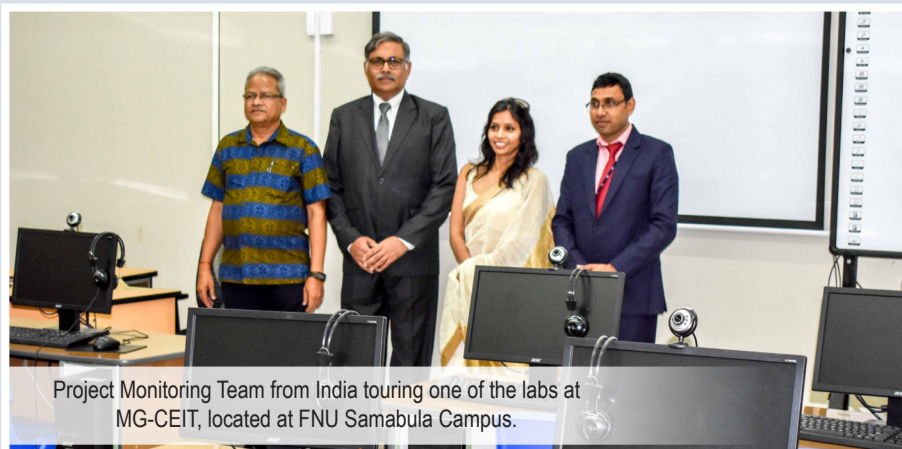
The Centre was established last year at FNU's Derrick Campus, with India's Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC) as the implementing agency and FNU as the hosting institution.

The delegation consisting of Indian Ministry of External Affairs Joint Secretary in-charge for Development Partnership Assistance, Dr Devyani Khobragade toured the MG-CEIT computer labs, which includes 51 computers and server equipment gifted by the Government of India.

The Government of India has sponsored deputation of two experts from India for two years. In addition, there is provision for six Fijian Master Trainers to get Government of India-sponsored specialised training in India. Four Master Trainers have already received training, and two others are currently undergoing training in India. Following the MG-CEIT facilities tour, the delegation met the FNU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nigel Healey at Nasinu Campus.

"We had a very successful meeting with the Joint Secretary, Indian High Commissioner Smt Padmaja and the project monitoring team," Professor Healey said.

"We also discussed offering more advanced courses at the MG-CEIT in Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and Cybersecurity. Some of these will be supported by the e-ITEC platform, which offers live online training by Indian specialists."



Project Monitoring Team from India touring one of the labs at MG-CEIT, located at FNU Samabula Campus.

"The Indian Government is also willing to support our aim of establishing an e-commerce incubator to help young tech-savvy graduates set up new e-commerce businesses here in Fiji. We are considering co-locating it with the MG-CEIT or the new cybersecurity laboratory. ITEC is willing to offer e-commerce courses through the MG-CEIT and to second Indian e-commerce experts and mentors to Fiji to support the development of this initiative."

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs Joint Secretary Devyani Khobragade said the project monitoring team were pleased to see the Centre thriving and contributing significantly to the ICT education and human resources needs of Fiji.

"We are happy to note that the Centre ensured it matches the needs of the industry through constant dialogue with stakeholders," she said.

"We have also decided that the Centre will be upgraded from a national to regional centre of excellence so that neighbouring Pacific Island countries accredited to the High Commission of India and alongside scholarships for those in Fiji and the Indian Government will also provide ITEC scholarships for government officials from Tuvalu, Kiribati, Vanuatu and Tonga to study here in Suva at the Centre."

"We also acknowledge the support of FNU in helping the Centre grow from strength to strength. The Centre will only be successful through the continued support of the hosting institution and for that, we are grateful to FNU."

Head of MG-CEIT, Mukesh Babu said the Centre had trained more than 210 students in over five certificate courses, with 17 programmes to be offered from later this year.

"We have received positive responses and interests from the industry as well as students who choose to enrol in our programmes," Babu said.

"The students study for an average of four months and are from various backgrounds – undergraduates, working professionals, graduates who completed their degrees and wish to further their IT skills."

"The courses ranged from Java Programming, Business Computing, Network Security and Software Testing with new courses to cover Data Computing, Information Technology, Android Programming, Data Communications and Technology and a free course on Learning Indian Language through Artificial Intelligence (LILA)."

The Centre will be officially launched this year.