

## Taslim graduates from World Maritime University



During Graduation at World Maritime University (L-R) Dr Henry Cleopatra – WMU President, Mohammed Taslim, Mr Kitack Lim – Secretary-General of IMO.

It was a proud moment for Fiji National University (FNU) staff Taslim Mohammed as he graduated with a Masters in Maritime Affairs, specialising in Education and Training from the World Maritime University (WMU) in Malmo, Sweden.

An Executive Officer at FNU's Fiji Maritime Academy (FMA), Taslim Mohammed was the lone Fijian among 130 students who graduated at the end of last year.

The soft-spoken Savusavu man acknowledged the sponsorship from the Government of Australia, particularly the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, which made it possible for him to attain this training and qualification from a renowned organisation.

International Maritime Organization recognizes WMU (IMO) and the United Nations General Assembly, which plays a significant role in maritime and ocean education, research, capacity-building and economic development while promoting roles of women in the maritime and ocean sectors.

Taslim spent one and a half years in Sweden. His Master's thesis was based on the "Impact analysis of introducing E-Learning to the Fijian seafarers."

He intends to utilise the knowledge attained from this training by joining FMA's academia from this year, upon the approval from the Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF) and the FMA Board.

"I also want to assist FMA with curriculum design and development apart from undertaking research and teaching students."

Taslim encourages youngsters to consider a career in the maritime industry.

"I am happy to be part of the maritime industry and urge students to take up studies in this field as the industry has various jobs available for you once you are competent at national and international level."

"Maritime is an area where seafarers get the opportunity to see the world while being paid for it. Maritime not only includes sailing – it has various onshore jobs available as well such as port management, piloting, maritime safety and surveillance, and so forth."

"Presently, it is no secret that there is a shortage of seafarers in the world, especially marine engineers. Therefore, I encourage students to consider a career in the maritime industry," Taslim added.

Speaking about his Master's journey, Taslim said this was a challenging phase of his life but also a rewarding one as it took him to places, he had never imagined he would ever visit.

### Challenges and sacrifices

According to Taslim, there were students from over 50 countries, and he needed to blend in with the rest of the students to be able to make friends with whom he could study and explore the country unknown to him.

"The atmosphere in Europe, especially WMU, is completely different from that of the South Pacific in many ways and it took me some time to adjust to the environment there," he said.

"Since, WMU is a post-graduate university – most of the students who enrolled there were very senior with great industry experience, and it was a challenge for me to blend in with them. Once I started interacting with them, I got over the fears and made good friends with whom I shared some great moments of travelling, storytelling, laughter and so forth."



Meeting with Fiji's High Commissioner to Australia, H.E Mr Luke Daunivalu in Canberra, Australia.

The language barrier was another hurdle for Taslim, not for the study environment but other day-to-day activities.

"Even though we were taught in English, the most common language used for business was Swedish and Arabic; therefore, it was a bit difficult for me to communicate for shopping other daily chores."

During the duration of his study, he managed to learn Swedish and Arabic, which eased his stay in Sweden.

Taslim admitted that collating data for this specific study was his biggest challenge.

"Most important and compulsory component of attaining this qualification was the submission of my thesis. It was challenging to collect data from Fiji while still in Sweden."

"It was difficult to communicate with the relevant authorities through emails and sometimes the data provided were outdated or even not available at all."

"At the end, I am glad I managed to complete my studies."

### Official tours and sight-seeing

According to Taslim, the courses at WMU (masters level) are designed in such a way that students actually get the feel of real situations that they are taught in the classroom. As part of this, the course had three official visits outside Sweden, which was related to his area of specialisation and training.

The first visit was to Horton in Norway.

"This visit was mainly dedicated to visiting some of the major technology-focused industries such as Kongsberg Simulators, where simulators and satellites are designed and manufactured for aircraft, ships, space and other related areas."

"We were also given the opportunity to board and observe how autonomous and semi-autonomous ships are being operated together with other firms that deal with technology and modern strategies in the Maritime industry."

Taslim's second visit was to London in the United Kingdom.

"The main purpose of this visit was to attend meetings at the IMO. We were fortunate to attend the Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW) 6th Session meeting, where the status of the countries on the white list of IMO was discussed."

"We also visited the Fleetwood Nautical Institute at Broadwater, England, where we were given the opportunity to observe and learn different strategies in Maritime curriculum development, managing a maritime institute, application of maritime regulations."

This visit also gave the football enthusiast an opportunity to stopover at Chelsea and Arsenal Stadium, where he met some professional footballers, such as Zlatan Ibrahimović (Swedish Professional Footballer) and Eden Hazard (Professional Footballer for Chelsea).

Since the Philippines is the major supplier of seafarers internationally, there are several Maritime Education and Training Institutes (METI's) in the country, where these seafarers get their formal training from. Hence, the third official visit was to Manilla in the Philippines.

"The purpose of this visit was to understand how these METI's operate and the standard of qualification they provide to seafarers."

Apart from these official trips, Taslim also visited places like Italy, Germany, Barcelona, Portugal, Dubai, Denmark, Singapore, Austria, Australia, Netherlands, Iceland and Poland.

### Encouraging fellow Fijians

Reflecting on his journey, Taslim said he cherished being allowed to study at the prestigious World Maritime University (WMU) in Malmo, Sweden.

He said Fijians are held in high regard at WMU and he encourages more like-minded students to take up studies in the Maritime industry.

"Nothing is impossible, and I encourage students interested in Maritime to set their sights in undertaking studies at WMU," said Taslim.

"The sea surrounds us and we need more people from Fiji and the Pacific to undertake studies so we can expand our knowledge and serve our region better."