

Speech by Mr. Tsuguyoshi Hada, Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan, at the Handing Over Ceremony for the 'Project for Provision of Blood Donor Bus to the Northern Division',

Friday, 20 November 2017, 10.00am, at Labasa Hospital

Honourable Alex O'Connor, Assistant Minister for Health & Medical Services,

Mr. Josefa Bolaqace (チョセファ・ボランガゼ), National Coordinator, Fiji National Blood Service,

Turaga Bale na Tui Macuata (トゥランガンバレ・ナ・トゥイ・マズアタ)

Mr. Vijay Chand, Special Administrator for Labasa and Savusavu Town Councils,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning, Yadra Vinaka, Namaste and Ohayō Gozaimasu.

I wish to thank Labasa Hospital and the Ministry of Health for the warm welcome extended to me this morning.

Today, I am happy to hand over the third blood donor bus Japan has donated to the Fiji National Blood Service, this time to the

Northern Division. The Government of Japan has provided funding worth One Hundred Ninety Five Thousand and Twenty-Three Fiji Dollars (FJ\$195,023) for this new bus. This project is implemented under Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects Programme or GGP in short. The first two buses were donated to the Central and Western Divisions, and together, these three blood donor buses can reach all areas on Viti Levu and Vanua Levu that have accessible roads, which means that most of Fiji's population can now voluntarily donate blood.

When FNBS requested for assistance last year, we were told that blood donors had to come and use the blood donation room here at Labasa Hospital, and in 2015, only half of the required blood amount was donated. Because of this, FNBS started conducting mobile blood drives using a general vehicle owned by Labasa Hospital, and the staff had to set up makeshift blood donor tents with a simple bed, without the convenience of proper equipment. When the hospital vehicle was unavailable, FNBS had to resort to hiring a vehicle, which was quite expensive. Despite all these efforts, in the 4th quarter of 2015, there was a shortage of blood for 48 patients.

The new specialized blood donor bus will strengthen the blood collection capacity of the Ministry of Health and ease the strain on medical professionals. Most importantly, it will contribute towards maintaining a steady supply of blood, for the benefit of the people in the Northern Division. In many cases this can be a matter of saving lives.

In order to reach blood donation targets set by FNBS and Labasa Hospital, they will need to organize regular blood drives. It is quite challenging for most people to come and donate blood here at the hospital. The new blood donor bus will elevate the outreach function of FNBS. It will help in effectively taking blood drives to the people, not only in shopping centers, markets, parks, industrial centers and other public areas, but also to those in remote parts of Vanua Levu who are willing to donate blood but are unable to come to Labasa. The specialized technology and built-in equipment of the new bus will also make the experience of donating blood easier for both the donor and the medical attendants at hand.

The first two blood donor buses Japan donated in 2012 and 2015 to the Fiji National Blood Service have contributed to Fiji's current

achievement of 86% voluntary blood donation, and I hope that this project will further strengthen the progress of the Fiji National Blood Service in achieving its 90% target by 2018, as a practical pathway towards attaining the World Health Organization's target of 100% voluntary donation by the year 2020.

I take this opportunity to highlight that since 1990, Japan has been providing assistance to grassroots communities in Fiji through 353 GGP Projects, with the total value exceeding US\$23 million. Japan is committed to providing assistance for the nation building in Fiji.

I conclude with confidence that this project will further strengthen the ties between Japan and Fiji.

Thank You, Vinaka Vakalevu, Dhanyavaadh, and Arigato Gozaimasu.

The End.