

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Takuji Hanatani, Ambassador of Japan,
At the Handing Over Ceremony for “The Project for Provision of
School Bus for Sigatoka School for Special Education” funded by the
Government of Japan**

Friday, 24 July 2015, 1.00 p.m. at Sigatoka School for Special Education

Mrs. Sera Saladuadua, Senior Education Officer, Nadroga,

Mrs. Coral Kennedy, School Chairperson,

Mrs. Asenaca Sukanatabua, Head Teacher,

Mr. Paulo Vueti, School Manager,

The Management Committee,

Teachers, Parents and Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon, Cola Vina, Namaste and Konnichiwa

Firstly, I wish to thank Sigatoka School for Special Education for the warm welcome extended to me and my colleague. Today, I am very pleased to hand over the new thirty seater bus to Sigatoka School for Special Education. The new bus, worth One Hundred Twenty Two Thousand Fiji Dollars (\$121, 652) is being provided under Japan’s Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects Programme or GGP in short.

On this auspicious occasion, I am delighted to be able to finally visit your school after having heard of the great achievements of this school. It is indeed heartening to note that despite the challenges that the students of this special school face everyday, they are able to carry out essential livelihood skills on their own. I am further thrilled to note that some are excelling academically, in craft work, baking, sewing, trade, etcetera. Hats off to the teachers who dedicate themselves in up-skilling these students to help them become resourceful and independent persons in the society.

It is being said that, "Where there's a will, there's a way", and Sigatoka School for Special Education is one such example of this famous saying.

I understand that this school's seventeen year old, seven seater minibus did not have the seating capacity to accommodate the fifty five students studying here. Mechanical failure and safety concerns were also worrying the school community. I am very hopeful that the new thirty seater bus will address these challenges as well as provide added comfort and pride, after all, from today this bus belongs to the school.

At this juncture, I wish to acknowledge that the Government of Fiji prioritizes special education under its overall education framework

and allocates separate funds for development in this area. I also wish to take this opportunity to especially praise the Fiji Government for providing the constitution in Braille format, in 2014. The approximately eight thousand visually impaired people in Fiji that make up around one percent of Fiji's population, now have the opportunity to read the supreme law of the country first hand. I am very pleased that this project is in line with the special education objectives of the Fiji Government, which is one of the key factors for Japan's contribution to this project.

To the students, I wish to reassure you all that you are truly special. Never doubt your potential and never feel that you are less capable than others. We are all equal as human beings. In order to remind you that how special you are and to give recognition to your contributions, I give you the example of the 'International Day for Persons Disabilities' that is celebrated by the whole world on 3 December every year.

Optional:

Speaking on your contributions, may I share the beauty of a recent Japanese invention, which perhaps might give greater inspiration to you all:

In Japan, 68 year old Mr. Masahiro Kuroda, a retired engineer, has created a device that enables the visually impaired to grasp the

shape of a painting by converting visual images into sound. This technology one day could be used at art museums and in science textbooks. He invented the device some years ago but put it on exhibition in Tokyo, in 2013. He is hopeful that his invention could enable people with visual impairments to contribute to art as well study science in the future.

It gives me great joy to say that since 1990 in Fiji, through our GGP Programme, we have provided assistance to grassroots communities by implementing 327 Projects, with the total value exceeding US\$18 million. As Fiji continues its nation building process in the years ahead, Japan remains committed to providing assistance for the socio-economic development of Fiji. I am honoured to have an opportunity to play an important role in developing special education in Fiji through our GGP Projects.

I conclude with confidence that this project will further strengthen the friendship between the people and governments of Fiji and Japan.

Thank you, Vina Valevu, Dhanyavaadh and Arigatou Gozaimasu.

The End.