

FLOOD CONTROL

River Plan Remains Paramount: Kumar

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Waisea Nasokia
NADI

The proposed Nadi River flood control measure remains a paramount issue, says Ministry of Agriculture principal officer West Vinesh Kumar.

He made these comments while speaking to the Japan Development Co-operation Tour 2016 group, which was mainly made up of the Government agencies and the media.

Mr Kumar also highlighted that discussions have been in place between the Fijian and Japanese governments about planning for the flood management study in the Nadi River Basin. This is to assist in addressing flooding in the town and homes in recent years.

"The Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), has been responsible for the implementation of the project and will also co-ordinate accordingly with other relevant organisations," Mr Kumar said.

He said the JICA team had done the feasibility studies and made the proposal which included costing and social impacts.

He said the stakeholders, including the Nadi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, iTaukei Land Trust Board and Nadi Town Council, had made the choice on the planning matter.

"A scooping team came from Japan and worked with the 17 authorities including a Government arm to be part of the feasibility ongoing studies. The options head from the stakeholders meeting was for the river improvement mainly widening."

The formulating flood control masterplan and the priority project include river widening, retarding basin, dike and a short cut (smoothing or alignment).

He said the Nadi River Basin has suffered from damage from cyclones and heavy rains during the nation's rainy season from November to April.

As a result Nadi eventually suffered as a result of floods in 2009 and 2012. Mr Kumar said the Japanese government was requested to assist with technical expertise on the project for the planning of the Nadi River Flood Control Structures. Edited by Jonathan Bryce

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Ministry of Agriculture principal officer West Vinesh Kumar (left), speaking at a presentation in Nadi yesterday. Photo: Waisea Nasokia

Flood mitigation

By FELIX CHAUDHARY

NADI'S flood issues can only be addressed by adopting a number of mitigation options, says a Japanese consultant commissioned to conduct a study of the Nadi catchment area.

"No one option will work because of the number of waterways in the Nadi catchment area and the geographical layout of the land," said Takashi Toyoda, an expert hired by the Japanese Government to work with the Nadi Town Council and government agencies.

He made the comments while addressing representatives from the Japanese Embassy, Fijian Government officials and local media reps who were participating in a tour of projects funded by the Japanese Government.

Among the proposals for flood mitigation suggested by Mr Toyoda were the construction of river dikes, widening of the Nadi River and the creation of retarding basins.

"With the dikes, we will be able to keep floodwaters out of Nadi Town and this will at least allow people access to services and employment."



West principal agricultural officer Vinesh Kumar shows members of the Japan Development Cooperation tour how high the 2012 floodwaters rose.

Picture: FELIX CHAUDHARY

\$20.6m projects

Japan helps upgrade service

By FELIX CHAUDHARY

A TOTAL of \$20.6million is being spent by the Japanese Government through its various donor agencies on four of its many projects in the country.

Three of the projects are in the Western Division and one in Suva.

The projects are designed to assist in disaster risk reduction, fisheries support, flood mitigation and empowerment of women.

Yesterday, representatives from the Japanese Embassy, Fijian Government and media organisations inspected the projects to see how they were helping people in the various communities they were being implemented in.

Japanese ambassador Takuji Hanatani said the Japan Development Co-operation Tour was designed to broaden understanding of his country's assistance programs to Fiji.

He said apart from the sites visited by tour participants yesterday in Suva, Sigatoka, Nadi and Ba, the Japanese Government was interested in addressing other issues facing the country.

"In 2015, we started the five-year Project for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases because NCDs are a very crucial challenge facing Fiji," he said. "This project will help in the capacity development of

health personnel in Fiji." Mr Hanatani said three Japanese medical experts would be brought in to help implement the project.

Apart from that, the Japanese Government embarked on a three-year initiative called REACH — Rights, Empowerment, and Cohesion for Rural and Urban Fijians.

Mr Hanatani said the project's main objective was to support Fiji's Ministry of Women and the Legal Aid Commission in pro-

moting peace-building and social cohesion through awareness programs.

"Through our recognition of Fiji's leading role in the region, in 2014 we began the South-South Co-operation Project with Fiji," he said.

"This project establishes itself on Fiji's ability to contribute to the region and aims to deliver capacity building and training of people from regional countries such as Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru in Fiji."

By FELIX CHAUDHARY

CONCERNED about people's access to information during natural disasters, the Japanese Government has given \$15million for the upgrade of a medium wave broadcasting system.

Through an agreement signed with the Fiji Government, the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation will establish a new medium wave radio broadcasting system at Naulu in Nakasi.

A study conducted by the Japanese Government established that most islands in the Fiji Group could not access the FM radio frequencies or television.

"All the islands, however, are able to access the AM radio frequency that was phased out years ago," said Peni Saurara from the Embassy of Japan.

"And many homes in the islands have radio sets that can access the AM radio frequency."

In August last year, the Japanese Government signed an agreement with Fiji for the works to be conducted at the FBC's Naulu transmitter.

Tenders for the project were called and Mr Saurara said the project was expected to be completed next year.

The Japanese Embassy says the previous transmitter had a number of issues because it contained parts that were installed in 1953.

Representatives from the Japanese Embassy, Fiji Government and media organisations are participating in a two-day tour of Japanese Government-funded projects across the Western Division.

The two-day tour ended with a visit to the Japanese Support for Gender Area at its Ba Training Centre yesterday afternoon.



Fiji Meteorological Service director Ravind Kumar with representatives from the Japanese Embassy.

Picture: BALJEET SINGH

\$16.6m aid helps weather office

By FELIX CHAUDHARY

FIJI has established itself as a recognised Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre because of the Japanese Government's \$16.6million aid and technical contribution, says Fiji Meteorological Service director Ravind Kumar.

"We are one of only six RSMCs in the world and it is all thanks to the Japanese Government and the funding and tech support they have

provided us through the Japan International Cooperation Agency or JICA," he said.

The other five RSMCs are situated in Miami and Honolulu in the US, Tokyo in Japan, New Delhi in India and La Reunion in the Indian Ocean.

Mr Kumar made the comments during a visit to the Nadi weather office by representatives from the Japanese Embassy, Fiji Government and media organisations.

"Because of Japan's aid assistance we have improved our tide observation system, communications systems, wind profiling, automatic weather stations, calibration of equipment and lightning detection systems among other things," he said.

The FMS director said through Japanese aid, the Nadi weather office now had direct access to high resolution data and images from outer space through the Japanese

Geo-Stationary Meteorological Satellite and the NOAA Polar Orbiting Satellite. Mr Kumar said the Nadi weather office building was constructed with assistance from the Japanese Government.

"This building has allowed FMS to become a hub for the Pacific in terms of weather forecasting training and so far we have trained 152 weather men and women from around the Pacific. Of this, 22 were locals," he said.

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