

The Honourable Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for iTaukei Affairs,  
Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs, Rear Admiral Ratu Josaia Voreqe  
Bainimarama

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

ブラ ヴィナカ  
Bula Vinaka

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Honourable Prime Minister for the  
hospitality accorded to us this afternoon.

I hear the Honourable Prime Minister has just returned from his tour of  
the Northern Division in the aftermath of TC Yasa and TC Ana,

Before I proceed further, I wish to convey my deepest sympathies to  
people of Fiji, for the suffering and destruction caused by these natural  
disasters.

Today is an auspicious day for Japan-Fiji relations as well as for  
enhancing Fiji's resilience against the impact of COVID-19,

as we have just formalized the “Emergency Yen Loan for COVID-19 Response”.

It is also my great honour to have formalized this emergency loan with the Honourable Prime Minister,

as this loan is the largest in Japan's long history of aid assistance to Fiji.

I am very pleased to say that through this Yen loan, Japan will provide a total funding of approximately Two Hundred Million Fijian Dollars (FJ\$200M) , which equates to approximately twelve percent (12%) of Fiji’s total revenue of this fiscal year 2020-2021, with exceptionally concessional conditions such as interest rate of 0.01%, fifteen (15) year-repayment period and four (4) year grace period.

Through this emergency Yen loan the Government of Japan aims to support Fijian Government’s efforts to stabilize and revitalize the Fijian economy, in addition to strengthening the health care system.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to highlight how Japan-Fiji relations have grown from strength to strength over the years

In 1970, Japan established diplomatic relations immediately after Fiji's independence, and since then in the last 50 years, Japan and Fiji have fostered the close friendship and become significant partner at the regional as well as international level.

Based on the concrete accomplishments of PALM8 held in 2018, which had the distinguished participation of the Honourable Prime Minister Bainimarama including the bilateral meeting with then Prime Minister ABE,

The Government of Japan elevated its relations with Fiji to a higher level.

In 2019, Mr. KONO Taro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, visited Fiji, which marked 32 years since the last visit by a Japanese Foreign Minister.

During this occasion, Minister KONO delivered his address on Japan's policy on Pacific Island Countries and emphasized that the government of Japan will strengthen its commitment and enhance the cooperation in the field of maritime issues, connectivity improvement, climate change and disaster management.

This policy is further succeeded by the new Prime Minister of Japan, H.E. Mr. SUGA Yoshihide, who was inaugurated in September last year.

Prime Minister SUGA has declared the goal of achieving “Carbon Neutral” net zero greenhouse gases emission status by 2050.

Prime Minister SUGA was quite pleased, when he received a report that the Honourable Prime Minister Bainimarama strongly encouraged this pledge through Twitter.

Japan and Fiji are significant partners tackling not only climate change, but also closely cooperating in addressing key global issues on the international stage, and we hope to further deepen cooperation in the future.

Being a key development partner of Fiji, Japan started its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Fiji in 1979, and has been contributing a total of approximately 1.2 billion Fijian dollars(60.1 billion Yen) over the last 40 years to 2019.

In addition, especially since last year, with the inclusion of this emergency loan, Japan is contributing Three Hundred and Thirty Million Fijian Dollars (FJ\$330Million) to Fiji.

The funding includes Stand-by Loan for Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction,

rehabilitation for three High Schools in Kadavu,

the regional project for immunization strengthening programs in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF

and the detail design phase of the Tamavua-i-wai Bridge.

I am privileged that on behalf of the Government of Japan,

today I am able to facilitate the Emergency Yen Loan for COVID-19 Response at a time when Fiji, a regional leader and the closest partner of Japan in the Pacific, is facing unprecedented challenges.

I conclude with confidence that this emergency loan will provide a meaningful basis for a stronger recovery and revitalization of the Fijian economy, as well as further strengthen friendship between the Governments and the peoples of Japan and Fiji.

Vinaka Vakalevu

**END**