
Address by H.E. Mr. KAWAKAMI Fumihiko, Ambassador of Japan,
at the ground breaking ceremony for Vunisea Secondary School
Wednesday 10th March 2021, Island of Kadavu

The Honorable Rosy Akbar, Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts,
Mr. Peniasi SAU, Principal, Vunisea Secondary School,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Yadra Vinaka and Good Morning.

First of all, I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Education and Vunisea Secondary School for all the arrangements in hosting this occasion as well as for the warm hospitality accorded to us.

I have begun my term as the Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Fiji 2 months ago. This is my first trip outside Viti Levu.

I must admit that I am pleasantly taken by the friendliness of the Fijians as well as by the beautiful nature of this island country.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, it is my honor to do the ground breaking of the project for the rehabilitation of Vunisea Secondary School together with the Honourable Minister for Education.

In 2019,TC Harold had seriously affected the schools on Kadavu Island.

This devastation occurred while the recovery and reconstruction from TC Keni was still underway.

In the aftermath of TC Harold, After Honourable Prime Minister Bainimarama inspected the damage to Kadavu, the Prime Minister's Office requested our embassy to assist in the restoration of all three Schools in Kadavu, including the Vunisea Secondary School.

The Government of Japan had decided to grant the funding through Grassroots Grant Assistance scheme for recovery and rehabilitation of these three schools.

I am very pleased to say that the Government of Japan has provided approximately Six hundred and one thousand Fiji Dollars for the restoration of the Vunisea Secondary School.

Today, it gives me great joy to see that through this groundbreaking ceremony, we have made tangible progress in the rehabilitation of Vunisea Secondary School.

I sympathize with the people of Kadavu as they have had to face the brunt of severe cyclones in quick succession in addition to the hardships and loss of livelihoods brought about by Covid-19 pandemic.

I hope that this project will further strengthen the resilience of your community against natural disasters and meaningfully contribute to the delivery of quality education for the benefit of the people of Kadavu.

Since 1990, through the Grassroots Grant Assistance scheme, Japan has been providing assistance to grassroots communities in Fiji, with over 396 Projects worth approximately 29 million US dollars.

And out of these, 227 projects were implemented for the development of the education sector.

I would like to highlight following assistance through Grassroots Grant Assistance scheme as the major examples.

In the Japanese Financial Year of 2019, the Embassy of Japan formalized 10 school projects, which was approximately 993 thousand FJD.

Three of 10 projects were handed over to schools such as

Naivicula District School in Tailevu,

Nakaidrau Infant School in Naitasiri

and Saint Mary's Primary School in Labasa.

These newly built classrooms has also enhanced the delivering of quality of education.

In addition, Nakaidrau Infant School was used as an evacuation center for the people Nasalia village when TC Yasa and Ana had hit Fiji.

At this juncture, I wish to highlight that Japan is committed to supporting Fiji on broader scale for the nation as a whole, to supporting its economy and its sustainable development.

As a disaster recovery measure for TC Harold, Yasa, and Anna, Japan disbursed its stand-by loan to Fiji worth 105 Million Fijian dollars (FJ\$105M) last month.

In addition on the 22nd February, I formalized, with the Honourable Prime Minister Bainimarama, Japan's "Emergency Yen Loan for COVID-19 Response" worth approximately 200 million Fijian Dollars. This loan is the largest in Japan's long history of aid assistance to Fiji. Through this emergency Yen loan the Government of Japan aims to support Fijian Government's efforts to stabilize and revitalize the Fijian economy.

The introduction of "Free Education Program" for primary and secondly schools is the most significant legacy of the Fijian government.

I would like to take this opportunity to praise for the leader ship by the Honourable Minister in reliable implementation of "Free Education Program" and effectively guiding the Ministry towards Sustainable

Development Goal 4 and maintaining the drive towards accomplishing Universal Access to Quality Education under Inclusive Socio- Economic Development which is one of the key approaches of Fiji's Five Year and Twenty Year Development Plan.

Investing in children's education is investing in the future of the country. This is a great empowerment for the country.

I conclude with confidence that this project will meaningfully contribute to improve the quality of education in Kadave as well as to further strengthen the friendship between the governments and peoples of Japan and Fiji.

Vinaka Vakalevu and Thank You.

The End.