

The Honorable ^{パルビーン} Parveen ^{クマール} Kumar ^{バラ} Bala , Minister for
Employment Productivity and Industrial Relations, Youth and
Sports,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

(Good Afternoon, Bula Vinaka, and Namaste,)

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to
the Honorable Minister and his team for hosting this Grant
Contract Signing Ceremony.

Since the beginning of 2020, the whole world has been
tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. Fiji has become one of the
most vaccinated societies in the world, and opened its borders
on December 1st last year. Following this measure, Fiji
significantly eased the restrictions towards COVID-19 last

month. Although the threat of the virus has not faded away, Fiji is one of the most successful countries in responding to the COVID 19 crisis and recovering economic and social activities. I would like to pay tribute to the leadership of the Fiji Government and the efforts of the people, for having made great achievements against the pandemic.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, it is my honor to formalize with the Honorable Minister Bala, the Japanese Government's Grant Assistance for "The Project for the upgrading of Nasau Youth Training Centre".

I am very pleased to say that through this Grant, the Government of Japan will provide one hundred fifteen thousand US Dollars (USD 115,125) for the construction of a learning facility for, the newly introduced 'Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation – Certificate 1' program.

In his request for this assistance, the Honorable Minister Bala stressed the importance of providing a second chance at education for young people, especially for those who are not part of the mainstream education system or who, upon reaching employment age, have faced challenges in getting a decent job.

As the Honorable Minister mentioned, I also believe that education for young people, their capacity building and upgrading of their skills are extremely important for the further development of Fiji in the future. We are very pleased to be able to support the Nasau Youth Training Center, the main facility for youth education in Fiji.

In addition, I highly appreciate the implementation of the curriculum on ‘Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation ’in the new classrooms which will be built with the support of Japan. As disaster risk reduction and climate change are part of the biggest challenges facing Fiji, the cooperation

of the Government of Japan with the Ministry of Youth's efforts on these issues will further enhance the value of this project.

It gives me great joy to see that the formalization of this grant today, is the tangible realization of Japan's commitments under the Japan-Pacific Bond Policy or KIZUNA Policy, announced by the former Japanese Prime Minister, SUGA Yoshihide, at the 9th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM9), held in July 2021. Through its new certificate level program, this training center will cover two priority cooperation areas of the KIZUNA Policy, namely "Climate Change and Disaster Resilience" and "Strengthening the Foundation for Sustainable and Resilient Economic Development".

I am happy to say that since 1990, Japan has implemented 411 projects through its Grassroots Grant Assistance scheme, with the total value exceeding 30.8 million US dollars. In

recent years, the Embassy of Japan has been implementing about 10 Grassroots Grant projects annually.

In March last year, I had the privilege of signing with Honorable Minister Bala, the project for the “Provision of Livestock breeding Facility for livelihoods of Youth Clubs”, in this same venue.

We strongly hope that these 2 projects will help empower youths to improve their livelihoods, increase their participation in youth education, capacity building and skills development. Moreover, this project will also contribute towards making youths better custodians of the environment, as well as of the future of the country.

As seen last year, at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics Games, the Fijian Rugby Sevens Men’s and Women’s Teams won gold and bronze medals respectively. Despite the suffering caused by the second wave of COVID-19, the ability of the

youths of Fiji to excel at the world's biggest sporting stage, brought happiness and hope to all Fijians. Because youths are our future, I wish to praise the Honorable Minister for his leading role in ensuring the empowerment and development of youths and sports in Fiji.

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

Thank You, Vinaka Vakalevu, and Dhanyavaadh.

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