
Speech by H.E. Mr. KAWAKAMI Fumihiko, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Fiji,
At the Handover Ceremony for the Ministry of Agriculture
Tuesday 29th March 2022, at 3.00 pm at the Ministry of Agriculture HQ, Suva

The Honorable ^{マヘンドラレディ} Mahendra REDDY, Minister for Agriculture,
Waterways and Environment,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon, Bula Vinaka, Namaste and Konnitiwa.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the Honorable Minister and his team for hosting this Handover Ceremony as well as for the warm hospitality extended to us.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, it is my honor to handover a new Excavator and 2 Tip Trucks to the Honorable Minister, worth approximately One Hundred Eighty Nine Thousand US Dollars (US\$188,780) for the Grassroots

Grant Assistance 'Project for Provision of Excavator and Tip Trucks for the Northern Divisional office'.

In his request for assistance, the Honourable Minister particularly emphasized that this project was prioritized by the Ministry as it is essential for boosting economic growth of the Northern Division, through development of the agriculture sector.

I signed this project with the Hon. Minister just a year ago. I am very pleased to be able to hand over the items today. I express my gratitude to the Ministry of Agriculture and all concerned for their efforts to complete this project on schedule despite the COVID-19 pandemic .

It gives me great joy to see that the handing over of the agricultural heavy machinery today, is the tangible realization of Japan's actions under the Japan-Pacific Bond Policy or

KIZUNA Policy, announced by then Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. SUGA Yoshihide, at the 9th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM9), held in July 2021. The Japanese phrase “KIZUNA” (絆) carries almost the same meaning as “Veitokani (ヴェイトカニ)” in iTaukei, which basically describes close bonds and connections between people. Amongst the 5 priority areas of the Joint Action Plan for the KIZUNA Policy, this project is in line with priority area 4 namely, "Strengthening the Foundation for Sustainable and Resilient Economic Development".

It gives me further happiness to say that this project is also aligned with Fiji’s Twenty Year and Five Year Development Plan, particularly with its respective targets and goals namely, “Food and Nutrition Security” as well as “Competitive, Sustainable and Value-adding Agriculture”.

I would like to take this opportunity to praise the efforts of the Honourable Minister for his leading role in achieving the Ministry's objectives. Through media coverage, we always see the Honorable Minister up and about, in the fields and farms, with the farmers, grassroots communities and stakeholders. Such commitment shows that apart from being a reputed academic of the region, he is a very 'hands-on' Minister who has been initiating numerous programmes in order to address issues in the agriculture sector.

I am also very pleased to enlighten you all that apart from this project, Japan has been actively providing assistance to Fiji's agricultural sector which includes formalization of our Grant Assistance worth approximately 6 million Fiji Dollars on 8th February 2022. The part of this funding will be provided for procurement of heavy machinery for agriculture development and waterways management, which will

effectively synergize with the machinery we handed-over today.

Japan also provided funding for procurement of a dredger in 2020 for better management of waterways. I believe the dredger is invaluable to the aspirations of the Ministry which not only helps in better management of waterways for agricultural purposes but it also transcends further into a crucial tool for disaster prevention, as it helps prevent flooding during cyclones and heavy rains.

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.

We understand that the impact of the pandemic on the economies of many countries, including Fiji, is long lasting. Japan hopes that the handed over machinery will assist farmers transition out of subsistence level farming to commercial agriculture which will result in the improvement of their livelihoods and eventually, contribute towards Fiji's national development economic recovery and growth.

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

Thank You, Vinaka Vakalevu, Dhanyavaadh and Arigato Gozaimasu.

END