

The Honorable Parveen Kumar Bala, Minister for Youth and Sports,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon, Bula Vinaka, Namaste and Konnichiwa.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Hon. Minister Bala, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and Naqaranikula Youth Club for hosting this ceremony as well as for the warm hospitality extended to my colleagues and I today.

I would like to start by congratulating Fiji for winning the Rugby World Cup Sevens championship for a 3rd time, on 11th September. This victory is after a lapse of 17 years, and I know that every Fijian around the world is super proud that the Melrose Cup is back on Fijian soil. Congratulations to the team and to Fiji for creating another milestone in the history of Rugby in Fiji.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I am honored to hand over a new piggery with equipment to Hon. Minister, worth approximately One Hundred Nineteen thousand Fiji Dollars (FJD118,923). This project is being implemented under the Government of Japan's Grassroots Grant Assistance scheme or GGP. Since 1990, we have funded 415 GGP projects for the sustainable development of Fiji, which are collectively worth more than 31 million US dollars.

The "Project for Provision of Livestock breeding Facility for livelihood of Youth Clubs" was requested by the Hon. Minister for providing opportunities to the youth clubs for earning a living, geared towards improving their standard of living and for broader grassroots communities. Upon recognizing the importance of the Hon. Minister's proposal, the Embassy decided to provide assistance based on our development cooperation policy of supporting the Basis for Economic Growth.

With our support, we strongly hope that youth activities will have a positive impact, not only for the youth club, but also in the improvement youth livelihoods. After the devastation of the recent natural disasters and the impact of the pandemic, I am confident that such revitalization of Fiji's youth will meaningfully contribute towards boosting Fiji's economic growth.

The Ministry will provide proper training on livestock management, project management and financial literacy. The new farming facility will benefit the youths as well as the village through enhancing their knowledge and skills on material maintenance together with improving their know-how on sound upkeep of farm facilities.

It gives me great joy to see that the handing over of a new piggery with respective equipment today, is the tangible realization of Japan's actions under the Japan-Pacific Bond Policy or KIZUNA Policy, announced by then Japanese Former Prime Minister, Mr. SUGA Yoshihide, at the 9th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM9), held in July 2021. The Japanese

phrase “KIZUNA” 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".

I also wish to emphasize that supporting this project is an integral part of our continued partnership with the Fijian Government. This project is respectively aligned to the objectives of Fiji’s 5 Year and 20 Year National Development Plan (NDP) namely with the “Goal; Empowering youth to be agents of change and promoting sports for development” as well as through one of its key approaches namely, “Inclusive Socio-economic Development”.

I express my gratitude to the Ministry of Youth and Sports and all stakeholders for their efforts to complete this project despite the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership of the Honorable Minister in ensuring the empowerment of Youths and Sports development based on the Ministry's vision and mission. A key part of our engagement with this project is partnering with the Fijian Government to empower the leaders of tomorrow.

On 7th May, the Japanese Foreign Minister Mr. HAYASHI Yoshimasa visited Fiji and met the Honourable Prime Minister Bainimarama. At the beginning of the meeting, the Honourable Prime Minister rightfully stated that “we are now enjoying the new era of co-operation”. Both, the Honourable Prime Minister and Foreign Minister HAYASHI mutually agreed to further strengthen Fiji-Japan bilateral relations. Earlier this month, Prime Minister Kishida and Hon Prime Minister Bainimarama met at UN Headquarters in New York.

Furthermore, on August 2, Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Bainimarama met at UN Headquarters in New York. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the Japan-Fiji partnership.

I would like to take this opportunity as Ambassador of Japan to assure that we will continue to implement the commitment of our Leaders to strengthen our assistance to Fiji.

I conclude with confidence that this project will help address the challenges faced by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in improving livelihoods of the recipient youth group and its wider community, together with further the strengthening friendship between the Governments and peoples of Japan and Fiji.

Thank You, Vinaka Vakalevu, Dhanyavaadh and Arigatou Gozaimasu.

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