
Address by H.E. Mr. KAWAKAMI Fumihiro, Ambassador of Japan,
at the Handover Ceremony for The Project for Improving Sanitation Environment of Ratu Ravuama
Vunivalu Memorial School
at 10 am on 7th December 2022, Mokani Village, Tailevu

The Honorable Premila Kumar, Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts,

Mr. Viliame Mulo, Head of School,

Delai, Vua na Gone Turaga na Tui Mabua, (Ratu) Emenoni Vunivalu

Mr. Avai Tulele, Director for Damanu Builders,

Parents, Teachers and Students,

Members of the Media

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Yadra Vinaka and Good Morning.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the school management and students for your hospitality and warm welcome extended to me and my colleagues today.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, it is my honor to handover a new 11 pan toilet facility, worth One hundred and Forty nine thousand Fijian Dollars (FJ\$149,060) to Ratu Ravuama Vunivalu Memorial School. The Government of Japan funded this project through its Grassroots Grant Assistance Scheme.

As one of the oldest schools in this locality, it has faced many challenges over the years in maintaining proper hygiene and sanitation standards for its toilet facilities.

In recognizing the difficulties faced by the School, the Government of Japan decided to provide this Grassroots Grant Assistance and including a toilet facility for those with disability. I am pleased to say that this project is in line with Fiji's development objectives in leaving no one behind and harmonizes with SDG 4, *“ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities*

for all,” as well as SDG 6 ‘Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all’.

Since 1990, Japan has implemented 415 projects through its Grassroots Grant Assistance scheme, with the total value exceeding 31 million US dollars. Out of the 415 projects, 234 were implemented in the education sector.

On 7th May this year, 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. In early August, Japan’s Prime Minister Kishida and Hon Prime Minister Bainimarama met at the UN Headquarters in New York.

Upon the successful outcome of both meetings, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening Japan-Fiji partnership.

As the Ambassador of Japan to Fiji, I am very pleased to emphasize that we will continue to implement the commitment of our Leaders to strengthen our assistance to Fiji as well as enhance friendship between our countries.

I would also like to take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of the Honorable Minister and her team on the development carried out through the Education sector in Fiji this past year. I further praise the Honorable Minister and her team for successfully implementing the Fiji Government's Free Education Programme every year. Such a historic initiative empowers students from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds to receive quality education and is in line with the Government's development objective namely; 'leave no one behind'. I am sure that through such efforts, in the years to come, Fiji will be able to foster a

much brighter for all Fijians. In addition to this, it must have been quite challenging to adapt to the new changes brought about by the pandemic. Overcoming such difficulties would not have been possible without your great leadership.

Dear Students and Teachers, though we are now in the post covid19 pandemic era, it is still a global crisis, and Fiji is still recovering. Education has become even more important now. The world needs new thinkers, new ideas, better solutions and innovations as humanity is facing increasing challenges. Through the guidance of your teachers and delivery of quality education, you will become future leaders and professionals of Fiji who will help tackle these increasing challenges. Apart from your own success, your country will need your leadership and your skills to strive ahead. This is why I encourage you all to work hard and try your best to succeed academically. I urge all stakeholders to please look after the facility to ensure it serves future generations to come.

I wish the Year 8 students all the very best in their upcoming external exam and I extend my Season's Greetings to you all..

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

Vinaka Vakalevu and Thank You.

The End.