

EditorialTime



THE Auckland Times
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Fiji's 40th Independence Anniversary



On 10 October 1970, Prince Charles, representing the British Government and his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, handed instruments of independence to Fiji's first Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. So began, the existence of a new state in the international community.

Since then, many milestones have been reached and passed, though recent history might overshadow the great leaps made by Fiji. It is to the credit of the Fiji Association in Auckland, to be offering another Essay Competition to Fiji secondary schools, to highlight the international achievements by Fiji, particularly in the field of the environment.

What better opportunity for young men and women in Fiji schools than in the 40th year of Fiji's independence to be reflecting upon such things, turning aside for a while the other troubled aspects of recent history.

With support from the New Zealand High Commission in Suva, Dr Satendra Singh and Lady June Hillary have once again, accepted the task to adjudicate and to read essays from the students. We can only reiterate our warm good wishes, thank the Fiji Association and NZ High Commission heartily.

The Auckland Times looks forward, subject to the consent of the adjudicators and the Fiji Association, of publishing some extracts from the winning essays.

Sir Edmund Hillary Fellowship Award – Inaugural Visitor



Mr Rahul Gandhi

Mr Rahul Gandhi was selected to be the inaugural visitor to New Zealand under an award program, instigated by the previous government of Helen Clark. Some eyebrows may have been raised that the inaugural visitor was perhaps not Nepalese

given the greater extent of Sir Edmund Hillary's actual works there.

However, if a high profiled visitor was needed to launch the scheme Rahul Gandhi, the son of former Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, grandson of another former Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, and great grand-son of India's inaugural Prime Minister Pundit Nehru was a good gesture. The nature of the visit was such that hardly anyone knew Mr Gandhi had come and gone, so how did this profile the Sir Edmund Hillary Fellowship Scheme for the wider community?

Even in India, very few lines were mentioned in the press, with one major newspaper highlighting an assurance given, on security in India, by Mr Gandhi to Opposition MP and former Minister,

Hon Chris Carter as the significant aspect.

Any pending Free Trade talks with Prime Minister Hon John Key were welcome, but hardly anything officially sanctioned by the Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs, where Mr Rahul Gandhi has no official role.

The Auckland Times has previously mentioned in an editorial that Sir Edmund Hillary's memorials seem not to have been properly put in place. Whatever happened to ideas that were sought to mark our permanent respect to the memory of the great man, much loved and respected in New Zealand.

The visit by Mr Rahul Gandhi was a nice gesture. It would make an interesting impact in terms of what Sir Edmund tried to achieve - with sleeves folded up, helping build schools and huts in Nepal and making generous patronage of other needy projects elsewhere -to also select someone such as a Maori craftsman, a weaver or potential leader, to visit Nepal/India, as a two way link.

Diplomatic Efforts Abound with Fiji

The Foreign Minister Hon Murray McCully deserves our praise and thanks for persevering in his efforts with Fiji.

The Minister traveled to Fiji recently, in yet another effort to engage with the Foreign Minister of Fiji's interim government, Ratu Inoke Kabuabola.

New Zealand is a close neighbor, a long standing friend and ally. It is imperative that Fiji and New Zealand restore high commissioners in Suva and Wellington with speed.

A very good sign towards this end is the agreement to appoint additional staff at both posts – an acting head of mission, Mr Phillip Taula from New Zealand to Suva and Ms Mere Tora from Fiji, to its mission in Wellington. This speaks well for both sides in their desire to re-establish the traditional links as good friends and good neighbors.

Our best wishes to both diplomats. As Mr McCully says, normalcy in such matters will not be achieved tomorrow, but commencing positive dialogue is a very good start. Congratulations to both Mr McCully and Ratu Inoke.



The Foreign Minister Hon Murray McCully

Helen Clark, ONZ

The investiture ceremony for our former Prime Minister Helen Clark, now a member of the Order of New Zealand, brought generous and well deserved praises for the leader who was at the helm for so long. Ms Clark has always been a good friend of various Indian communities and remains an advocate for causes that are dear to her. Ms Clark chose the Badge of her former friend and ally, the late Ms Sonia Davis, thereby bringing further accolades from those who greatly admired Ms Davis for her straightforward march in social causes, particularly for women.

Our congratulations are offered to Ms Clark on her investiture ceremony in Auckland, attended by her husband, her parents and many friends. As her mother remarked, Helen Clark seems to go from one milestone to another with ease. Her current role as head of the United Nations Development Program takes her around the world again, though this time, she has the weight of many nations on her shoulders instead of just New Zealand.



40th Anniversary of Fiji's Independence-1970-2010 Essay Competition



To commemorate the 40th anniversary of Fiji's independence, the Fiji Association in Auckland Inc, with support from the New Zealand High Commission, Suva, offered an Essay Competition to secondary school students in Fiji.

Fiji Association Secretary Ms Kamath said "The Essay Competition is designed to allow students opportunities to research Fiji's contributions in the international community since independence in 1970.

It is hoped that students will draw on resources to develop some of the achievements by Fiji in environment and social, gender issues in regional or international levels."

Adjudicator Dr Satendra Singh said "There are many outstanding aspects of Fiji's post independence foreign policies and its special role in both regional and international organizations. The 40th anniversary is also a celebration of the founding of Fiji's Foreign Office."

Dr Singh was a member of the founding office of the Department of Foreign Affairs after Fiji's independence. Adjudicator Lady Hillary said "We had wonderful essays last year and expect that many more students will enjoy writing about these issues – we are looking forward to the essays."

The Fiji Foreign Affairs Department was instigated



The Essay adjudicators, Lady June Hillary, QSM and Dr Satendra Singh

within the office of the Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, regarded by most observers as the father of modern Fiji.

Although the recent history of Fiji has been overshadowed by coups and political unrest since 1987 in particular, Fiji has established a creditable role in international affairs.

Dr Satendra Singh said "There are many areas which come to mind in this respect, some that I was fortunate enough to be directly associated with, forty years ago. One area was the development of a regional institution, something that Ratu Mara worked incredibly hard to formulate. When the



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Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, GCMG, KBE, CF. Fiji's first Prime Minister

agreement establishing the Forum was ready to be signed, I recall the satisfaction we all felt in Foreign Affairs.

The signing ceremony took place in Suva, and I remember sending copies of the treaty to member nations as Fiji was the depositary of this. We also registered the treaty with the United Nations.

In those days, we did not have the advantages of internet or facsimile and it was pretty much writing letters and getting down to locating material through numerous means such as via friendly diplomatic missions who had more resources."

Fiji commenced its diplomatic relations with a handful of overseas posts – in London, Canberra, USA and the United Nations.

Several nations already had diplomatic missions in Suva in 1970, and these were upgraded to embassy or High Commission.

Over the years Fiji established a wider network of diplomatic posts, especially in Asia, with embassies established in countries such as Japan, China, Malaysia and Europe.

It was not until 2005 that Fiji opened its high commission in New Delhi, although India maintained a commission in Suva since 1946. This was upgraded in 1970 when Fiji became independent.

India has also maintained a Cultural Centre in Fiji since 1972.

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