

REPORT ON THE
KOREAN TRADE AND INVESTMENT MISSION TO
FIJI
29th NOVEMBER- 4th DECEMBER 2009

INTRODUCTION

1. A Trade and Investment mission was led by Honorary Consul General, Korea - Mr. Woo Joo Chang from 30th November to 4th December 2009. The delegation comprised of prominent business representatives from Seoul, Korea. The Delegation expressed great interest in exploring trade and investment opportunities in Airport Facilities, the Water Industry and Land & Resort Development Sectors. Accompanying the Consul General to Fiji was the Chief of New Business Development of the KABI International Management Society, Ms. Hyejeong Pak who was the group's coordinator and interpreter.

2. The Fiji Islands Trade and Investment Bureau (FTIB) were tasked to arrange meetings with relevant stakeholders from local and state government agencies including the private sector. Other tasks undertaken by FTIB included:

- ❖ Arranging appointments and accommodation bookings for the mission delegates;
- ❖ Confirming the delegation's itinerary and accompanying the delegation to all their visits.

3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation & Civil Aviation was responsible for appropriate facilitation of protocol arrangements.

DAY 1: 30 MONDAY NOVEMBER 2009

4. The Delegation arrived in Nadi at around 9.00hrs and was treated with a 'Bula Smile' from the protocol officers and the Liaison Officer for this trade delegation Mr. Niraj Mudaliar. Upon arrival there was also a subsequent telephone discussion between the Hon Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Civil Aviation, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola and the Head of the Delegation Gen Woo-Joo Chang, who then informed the rest of the members of the delegation that; the Hon Minister has welcomed them all to Fiji and was very much privileged to have a delegation of such magnitude visit Fiji.

5. After exploring the beauty of the western coast of Nadi and Sigatoka and various hotels and golf courses along the route, the delegation checked in at Holiday Inn in Suva at around 15.00hrs.

6. The Delegation was hosted to a dinner at 18.00hrs at the VIP House by the Hon Minister, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Roving Ambassador, Ratu Tui Cavuilati and Mr. Solo Mara, the Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Civil Aviation,

DAY 2: 1 TUESDAY DECEMBER 2009

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND CIVIL AVIATION

7. At around 9.00hrs the delegation met with Honorable Minister - Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Roving Ambassador - Ratu Tui Cavuilati, Permanent Secretary - Mr. Solo Mara, Deputy Secretary, Economics & Trade – Mr. Shaheen Ali and his team. Discussions were made on the delegation's different areas of interests. Topic of discussion included education, duty free shops, water industry, gaming, airport, shipping services and waste management. It was mutually agreed by both parties that by having more BTA's is only way forward to intensify the current trade relation that exists between Korea and Fiji.

FIJI ISLANDS TRADE & INVESTMENT BUREAU

8. At around 11.00hrs delegation met with the Chief Executive Officer for FTIB, Ms. Annie Rogers and her team and officials from relevant Government Ministries/Agencies. The meeting was convened at the Fiji Islands Trade & Investment Bureau conference room and included representatives from the Fiji Islands Revenue & Customs Authority, Department of Immigration, Native Land Trust Board, Ministry of Lands, Department of Mineral Resources, and the Reserve Bank of Fiji. The meeting facilitated general discussion on the opportunities available for investment in Fiji. The delegation were made aware of the pre-requisites of setting up a business in Fiji. They were also informed of the advantages of setting up operations in one of the available tax free regions. The Bureau facilitated site and factory visits for the delegate's specific area of interest.

MINISTRY OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

9. At around 14.30hrs the delegates visited the Ministry of Primary Industries and met with Honorable Minister, Mr. Joketani Cokanasiga and officials from the Agriculture Department. Discussions were made on the viability of setting up a Noni (*Kura*) Juice extraction factory in Fiji. Minister Cokanasiga covered areas his Ministry is currently trying to develop and tap into. Areas of development focused on developing and increasing local production of agricultural based products such as root crops, fruits and vegetables. Minister also emphasized on the shift from traditional farming to a more

advanced means of farming, this includes the provision of cooler climatic conditions through the use of windmills, coolers, solar panels and turbines.

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

10. The meeting with the Attorney General was at 15.30hrs where reasons to invest in Fiji were outlined. The delegations were introduced to the tourism sector in Fiji and general questions on investing in a tourism project were asked and exchanged with the Minister. The issue of gambling industry was also highlighted by the Hon. Minister, where he stated that the government is seriously analyzing the possibility of having casinos in Fiji and also the ramifications of it. Prof Cha suggested that they should follow the concept that currently exists in Korea whereby only tourists are allowed to gamble. The Hon Minister thanked Prof. Cha for his suggestion but stated that there are some very wealthy people in Fiji who will oppose to the idea, but there are options available such as having a membership fees for the locals who are interested to gamble.

11. The Delegation together with the Hon. Minister, Roving Ambassador, the Permanent Secretary and Senior Officials from the respective divisions of the Ministry were hosted to dinner by the H.E Mr. Zeon Nam-Jin, the Korean Ambassador to Fiji and his officials at the Southern Cross Hotel.

DAY 3: 2 WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 2009

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT – RATU EPELI NAILATIKAU

12. His Excellency the President, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau met with the Trade and Investment delegation at around 9.00 hrs in his Presidential Office. Consul General Woo Joo Chang introduced his team and discussed the possibility of introducing a ‘musical cultural’ exchange program between Fiji and Korea. His Excellency the President mentioned he would like the delegation to explore Fiji’s investment capabilities that would strengthen and encourage trade between Fiji and Korea, and reiterated that, how pleased he was to have such a delegation visit our shores. The Delegation then had coffee and were given a tour around the official residence of the President.

HONORABLE PRIME MINISTER – COMMODORE J. V. BAINIMARAMA

13. The Honorable Prime Minister, Commodore Joasaia Voreqe Bainimarama met the delegates at around 10.30 hrs and thanked the Korean Government for retaining business ties with Fiji. General Chang introduced his team to the Honorable Prime Minister and with each member of General Chang’s team having a unique interest in Fiji; the Prime Minister highlighted each sector accordingly in the 45 minute meeting in his chambers. In regards to tourism the Prime Minister informed the delegates that with direct flights now to Korea and Hong Kong, Fiji should be able to attract more Asian tourists and business people. This information added value to Mr. Jimmy Cha’s, a Professor at the Sejong University, as his intention was to explore casino operations for Fiji. Mr. Cha had a

wealth of experience in casinos as he has assisted in setting up a lot of casinos in Las Vegas, United States of America and also in Korean. The Hon. Prime Minister stated there is a lot of opposition by churches and a lot of other social ill when the issue of casinos are discussed in the country, therefore his government will have to thoroughly dissect all the pros and cons, before giving the all clear for casinos to operate in Fiji, not forgetting the economic return it can bring to the country if proper legislations and other mechanisms are put in place. On the same not Prof Cha alluded to the Hon. Prime Minister that Korea also faced similar opposition as nearly forty (40) percent of Korea's population are also strong believers of Christ and it was for this very basic reason he was specifically asked by the Head of State in Korea for his proficiency in the gaming industry. He then alluded that in Korea locals are prohibited to engross themselves with casinos and despite this the gaming industry has grown ,they started with only one (1) casino but now they have seven (7) casino's and the demand is more as the industry starts to show the economic returns to the country. The Hon Prime Minister was very impressed to hear Prof.Cha's views and asked him the dollar value of setting up a casino. Prof Cha informed the Prime Minister that to set up a casino will cost about US \$30 million that includes machines and also training the individuals who will be employed. Prof Cha assured the Prime Minister of his assistance in this regard and even offered to invest and set up the casino on his own accord if the government finds it difficult in looking for the much need funds, if the government endorses the operation of casinos in the country in the near future. The Prime Minister then requested Prof Cha to have a look at the Momi Bay Resort which the government is embarking on to sell. The Prime Minister informed the delegation that the investor for this particular project has gone bankrupt and there was also a substantial amount of money that was invested into the project by FNPF. The government was trying its best to sell the Momi Bay Resort in order to recuperate its cost, and the idea that was floated once to the government was that, if a casino is enticed to the resort it would attract potential buyers for the resort. The Delegation then made presentation of gifts to the Hon. Prime Minister and were offered light refreshments.

(MISSION MEMBERS BROKE INTO GROUPS ACCORDING TO THEIR INTEREST FOR DEDICATED BRIEFING WITH VARIOUS GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND PRIVATE SECTOR)

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES, TOURISM & COMMUNICATIONS

14. Permanent Secretary Public Enterprise, Mrs. Taina Tagicakibau and her team met with the four Korean delegations who were interested in shipping and airport services. Director, Mr Iliesa Lutu did a presentation on renovation of shipping ports and airport facilities. The delegations were then given a short tour around the Suva Port Harbour and the proposed Rokobili Terminal.

FIJI NATIONAL PROVIDENT FUND

15. The meeting at the Fiji National Provident Fund was conducted by Mr. Suliano Ramanu, Manager Investments, where Mr. Jimmy Cha and his two employees were shown brief presentation on Momi Bay Project. Questions such as the location, price and reasons for selling off the project were answered by Mr. Ramanu. The meeting was a short one as the delegates had other meetings to attend for the day

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

16. MBI Logistics showed interest in capital development in the development projects in Fiji principally in agriculture, fisheries and livestock, mineral water development in Fiji, retail and trading business, and recruitment of labour in the quarry and mining sector. Minister for Primary Industries, Jeketani Cokanasiga, said that his Ministry is committed towards capturing the spirit of the company's mission as it is a big opportunity for Fiji and will open market access and bring in developments in the rural sector. The delegates were taken to a local noni factory (Bio Pacifika), the investors showed immense interest in the local production of noni juice. They also visited a noni project of Kahuna Herbal Products in Labasa and were impressed with the production and the amount of space at the disposal and the organic environment within which it operates. The Delegates hope to sign an MOU with Kahuna Herbals Products for the sole distributorship of noni in Asia.

17. At around 19.00hrs, the Hon Prime Minister together with the Senior Ministers of his cabinet and some Permanent Secretaries of the government ministries hosted the delegation to a Sea Food Dinner at the Tiko's Floating Seafood Restaurant.

DAY4: 3THURSDAY DECEMBER 2009

18. At around 8.30 hrs the Delegation departed for Natadola Resort & Spa and Golf Tour where they relaxed and played golf.

DAY5: 4 FRIDAY DECEMBER 2009

19. At Around 9.00hrs the delegation arrived at the VIP launch at the Nadi International Airport and was farewell by the Roving Ambassador, Ratu Tui Cavuilati. The departing words from the delegation was that they were overwhelmed by the Fijian Hospitality and will always cherish their stay in Fiji .The Delegation also echoed that they have achieved the objectives of this visit and will surely return to expand their business interest with Fiji, and then boarded the plan bound for Inchon International Airport.

CONCLUSION

20. These type of investment mission is very important if we are to achieve economic prosperity to our full potential. The hard work that was done by HE.Mr. Isikeli Maitoga, Fiji's Ambassador to Japan and his team, in doing all the preparatory work for this delegation from their end will surely nurture the fruits for the government, as we embark towards the road of the Look North Policy. In these difficult times when our tradition allies have become our greatest embargo, to have as many trade missions as possible is the only way forward.

'WE CAN BUILD FOUNDATIONS EVERYWHERE, IF THEY ARE
WELL AND TRULY LAID'

MR.NIRAJ MUDALIAR
ECONOMICS & TRADE DIVISION