

# UniFiji

# Watch



Issue No. 1

A publication by the University of Fiji's first journalism students

June 2022



Picture: Virisila Enikosuna

Ala Cassandra Singh celebrates with her son, Jazz, after graduating with a Bachelor of Laws degree. She was among 404 students who received their degrees at the University of Fiji's graduation ceremony on May 27. Students graduated in wide array of subjects ranging from science and literature and languages to law and business.

• Turn to Page 2 for more on the graduation

## Students set to start at new Ba campus

NEARLY 100 students will soon be enjoying the benefits of the \$2.5m facilities at the new Ba campus of the University of Fiji.

This will be the university's third site – including existing sites at Saweni near Lautoka, and at Samabula, just outside of Suva.

It has been designed for, and will cater specifically to, students taking the new Bachelor of Medical Health Science (BMHS) to be delivered by the Umanand Prasad School Of Medicine And Health Sciences.

Ravineet Sami, the university's executive director of fin-

By Shaniyah Khan

ance planning and development, said development of the campus had been held back because of the Covid pandemic, which had also had financial implications for the university.

The university's founders, the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, had offered space next to the DAV College in Ba for the new campus in 2019.

"The founders offered to the university that there is a space available and should the university want to start its Ba campus

then it can do so," Mr Sami said.

After much discussion between the different committees of the university the finance planning and development team decided they were ready to design the buildings and to go ahead with construction.

The top floor of the three-storey building has a lecture theatre – to accommodate up to 95 students – and two tutorial rooms.

On the second floor there are two labs and the ground floor has washrooms with disabled access, a library and a computer lab.

The University's very own

cafe has a presence on the new site also. Right next to the computer lab, Bema Cino has a seating area for snacks and hot and cold drinks.

The campus also has a reserved water tank in case of water cuts, with a generator ready to cut in if the power fails.

Students that have applied for the BMHS programme from the Saweni campus will be transported daily to and from Ba.

A date has yet to be announced for the official opening of the campus but the university council has already had its first meeting on the site.

### Journalism course important for our country and for students

#### Editorial

THE new Journalism and Media programme at the University of Fiji will have a major beneficial impact on the industry in Fiji.

Introduced in the first semester of this year, the unique course offers a three-year degree programme which will supply the country with well-trained and professional reporters. Right from the beginning the students will have training and experience in the field and in the classroom.

It answers a request from the industry for journalists who get practical experience of their future work from the first year of their training.

Students are also given an opportunity to learn from journalists who have had years of experience in newsrooms in both local and overseas newsrooms.

Being a journalist means having a passion for your job, being able to reach out to people with your words, and also being able to help and support people through your stories.

This journalism course promises to deliver passionate journalists who will tell the stories of their communities.

– Virisila Enikosuna  
Editor

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## New funding will help journalism programme



The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Shaista Shameem

WHEN the journalism and media programme started at the beginning of the year, it was not supported by the Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Services.

But, as of the second semester, both scholarships and loans are available. This will mean an expected increase in the number of students wanting to study in the unique journalism and media programme.

The programme was introduced at the request of Ms Rosie Doviverata of Fiji Sun, who attended one of the University's Roundtables on Fiji's National Development Plans in 2021. Ms Doviverata's view was that what the media industry needed was journalists who had practical training from Year One of their university course.

The excellent programme was then put together with the help of the media industry in Fiji.

Along with providing students and the University community with its own newspaper the journalism course will also open the University to media interest and also supply the media industry with well-trained journalists and media personnel.

I think this first publication by the students is a great idea – very original.

The University Community already has its radio station run by students – the Vox Populi; now it will have its own newspaper through its web publication, which will be great news as there are always news items to cover at the University.

As a former journalist, I have confidence in the students of the University's Journalism and Media Programme, and certainly, these students will become the best there is in the journalism field in Fiji and the Pacific

## Golden result after a tough journey

IT HAS been a challenging academic journey for new graduate Mohammed Zameel. But, with courage and determination, he was able to get his bachelor's degree and graduate this year.

Not only that – he won four gold medals and was named valedictorian.

The 23-year-old, who qualified with a bachelor of commerce degree in management and information technology, was among 404 students who graduated on Friday, May 27.

For Mr Zameel there was extra excitement.

"I was speechless when I was informed that I was being awarded four gold medals and most importantly being the valedictorian," Mr Zameel said.

Face-to-face learning was restricted because of Covid measures, and communication was difficult during his studies. Mr Zameel thanked his course co-ordinators for going above and beyond their roles

By Shaniyah Khan

in changing the course outlines to suit the needs of students

"Studying from home in the middle of a pandemic has not been easy," he said.

Mr Zameel, of Sabeto, Nadi, dedicated his success mainly to his parents. He credited his parents for his religious faith and the morals and values they instilled in him.

"I am really glad to have such wonderful parents in my life and I would like to thank almighty God for giving me the success that I have today".

"I am hoping to continue working in a leading business industry in Fiji".

"I'd like to express my gratitude to the government of Fiji for funding my education under the national toppers scheme".

He works at Jacks of Fiji in Nadi.



Valedictorian Mohammed Zameel with his gold medals

## Ala beats the odds to get her law degree

By Shaniyah Khan

ALA Cassandra Singh could not hide her pride and joy as all her hard work and sacrifice paid off with a law degree.

She had managed to juggle the demands of full-time study and looking after her little boy, Jazz, to achieve her dream of getting a Bachelor of Laws degree.

She had also worked to pay for her family's upkeep.

Ms Singh, 23, graduated with 403 others at the University of Fiji's 2022 graduation ceremony at Saweni campus on May 27.

She said the journey to the degree had been full of ups and downs trying to be a student and a mother.

"It has been a very hectic journey for me as a single mother to juggle my studies and to look after my son".

She paid a special tribute to her own mother, who herself had had dreams of pursuing a career in law, and who helped with childcare for Jazz, 4.

"My law degree is somewhat of an achievement for my mom as she had also wanted to pursue law too".

She also thanked others in the community who had helped.

"I am thankful to the school, along with my peers and family for their unconditional support as it has gotten me this far."

She took help where it was available to get her through her studies, including from the University's counselling service.

"Engaging with the school counsellor



Ala Cassandra Singh, with her mother, Alanieta Vukimoala, and her son Jazz, 4

helped me a lot through my mental health journey. At one point I was burnt out as I had been doing five units and also trying to be the best mum to my son".

And she took advantage of the loans

offered by the Tertiary Educations Loan Scheme.

Now she plans to keep working by finding the best possible job in the field she has spent time and effort training for.



## University aiming for a greener landscape

By Simran Dass and other reporters

THE University of Fiji has begun a programme that will improve the natural environment in which students and staff work and learn.

The five-year programme aims for more green spaces, monthly market days for local produce and crafts, and the development of an organic plant nursery that will help the establishment of a beekeeping and honey-production project.

A practical expectation of the organic project is that it will provide a good amount of the best quality produce that the Bema Cino cafe, on the Saweni campus, can use.

The programme, dubbed the Gaia Landscape Project, is part of the university's efforts to engage with the com-

munity in which it exists, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Shaista Shameem, said. It will also be part of the university's environmental and social responsibilities to that community.

The Cuban Ambassador to Fiji, Jose Manuel Galego Montano, planted a royal palm, his nation's national tree, at the Saweni campus, to launch the Gaia project on May 18.

The Samabula campus will soon announce its own plans, and, at Saweni, different schools have started to work on their gardens

A cleaner and greener university hopes

it will attract more visitors to its gardens and environment.

An important component of the programme is the training of staff to develop alternative sources of income from sustainable, small-scale industries and businesses.

The university also aims to increase the amount of its waste it recycles year by year till it hits the 30% mark by 2026. It is one way the university plans to reduce its carbon footprint.

The programme also aims to identify and invest in alternative energy sources so the university can cut back on what it spends on power supply, and set an example to the community on sustainable design and waste management

## New funding will help journalism programme to expand



The Head of Department, Dr Kamala Naiker

I AM very excited about this first publication by the students of our new Journalism and Media programme.

It will give the students much-needed

exposure, confidence, and experience in understanding the dynamics and role of journalists. We expect this publication to ensure our University Community stays updated about what's happening around us.

This publication will showcase the first-year Journalism students' talent and knowledge gained through studies, and we look forward to more publications in the future.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant the University could not publicise the new Journalism programme to Year 13 students in 2021. So, only a limited number of students were able to enrol in the first semester.

In June and July, the University plans to get more students to join the course by giving students and secondary institutions clear details about the programme.

Our course provides opportunities for students who dream of a career in journalism, at a cost they can afford. And now that the Tertiary Scholarship Loan Scheme will offer scholarships and loans, it will help students wishing to pursue their studies in Journalism as well as other programmes.

The quality of work by these aspiring journalists will not only reflect well on the University, it will promote the programme locally and internationally.

These students will take their place in our university's history as pioneers of the journalism programme and become an inspiration for future students. As chosen ones, the students will represent the institution and country as the first batch of the University of Fiji's, Journalism and Media Studies Programme.

I wish you all the very best.

## Swedish duo look for disaster connections

By Seran Devi

NATURAL disasters in Fiji often bring the added problems of broken communications and disrupted power supplies to communities where homes have been destroyed and people killed. Ferocious winds during hurricanes destroy power lines and heavy rains lead to floods that destroy phone or radio links.

Two Swedish students are working with the University of Fiji to look for ways to ensure there is at least an emergency supply of power during disasters such as hurricanes or floods.

Erika Rebhan and Ellinor Wahnström, both of Sweden's KTH Royal Institute of Technology, have been visiting villages around Fiji doing their research.

Fiji's energy is mostly generated by hydro and diesel generators, as well as wood, coal, and petroleum products. These sources can face a lot of problems during natural disasters.

"This study will help us figure out the most efficient way to generate energy in Fiji using renewable resources," Ms Rebhan said.

A good energy supply could save lives by keeping people connected during nat-

Below: Ellinor Wahnström, second from right, and Erika Rebhan, second from left with Dr Ramendra Prasad, their supervisor in Fiji, and research assistant Kelera Raiola



Above: Erika Rebhan, right, talks to a resident of Abaca Village, in Ba, during her survey

ural disasters. She pointed to solar energy as a widely used and effective sustainable energy source that could be used around Fiji.

One of the benefits of embracing renewable energy sources is the cost savings it can bring. The costs are predictable, unlike, say the fluctuations of oil prices.

Renewable sources are also clean, safe, and effective, and it creates work for

people locally, while being independent of the national power grid.

Ms Rebhan also pointed out that the development of effective technology can help in the development of a country.

Both students are supervised in Fiji by Dr Ramendra Prasad, head of the Science Department in the School of Science and Technology

## Taking new tech into rural communities

By Rishika Chand

IF Alvin Prasad fulfils his dreams, vegetable farmers – particularly women – will have their lives changed by being able to earn more by growing things more productively.

Prasad and other colleagues from the University of Fiji have teamed up with the Australian government to bring new technology into rural communities.

They will focus particularly on women growers from eight communities around Ba in this special project. Seventy per cent of the participants will be women, and there will be a strong attempt to get disabled people involved also. Each community will have 10 participants.

Prasad, a lecturer in computer science, and his team will provide training and equipment that will improve the farmers'



Alvin Prasad ... trying to bridge the digital divide

output. The growers will also get help to sell their produce online and to communicate with consumers and fellow farmers online.

Prasad and the team have successfully

completed one training session, which was a one-day event at a village hall in Ba.

The training session was led by university academics with the assistance of student volunteers, and the materials for the sessions were prepared by university staff.

Prasad said, "We'll educate them on how to use the latest technology, such as the internet, office applications, digital marketing, and so on."

He expects the options and capacity of rural communities to be strengthened as this project continues.

Bridging the digital divide between rural and urban communities and allowing this group to participate will increase people's opportunities.

Other members of his team include Shireen Nisha, Danian Singh, Prateshni Chand, and Rishal Chand.





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The University of Fiji  
(An Entity of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji)

# Leisure Watch

## YOUR SAY – on the resumption of face-to-face learning



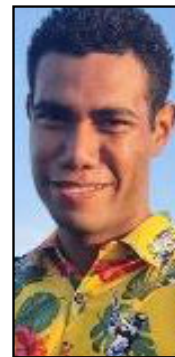
**Raina Prasad, nursing student:** The resumption of face-to-face classes will make learning more effective and easy. It gives us the opportunity to clear our doubts without any hesitation when in person with our lecturers



**Shanil Chetty, postgrad diploma in IT:** The university should think about a more blended option which benefits all. However, I'm looking forward to seeing students back on campus



**Malin Deo, nursing student:** I feel face to face learning will be more efficient as I will be able to have better understanding of my lectures



**Jekope Kaicawaro, IT student:** The return of face-to-face is good for labs and tutorials as we could always have our lectures done online



**Sanjeshni Narayan, BSc student:** The resumption of face-to-face is great although I feel it would have been better to start in Semester Two as the units are new and students would be more focused

# Food for the body as the mind is being nourished

By Seran Devi

ON any campus, there is always a buzz of activity. Students, sometimes anxious, busy with their studies; academic staff focus on their next lecture, and support staff ensure that they deliver the services a large community needs. Sometimes in the middle of all this, people forget that their health is also a priority.

The Bema Cino café aims to fill the gap and help students at the University of Fiji to remember that physical and mental health are as important as their intellectual well-being.

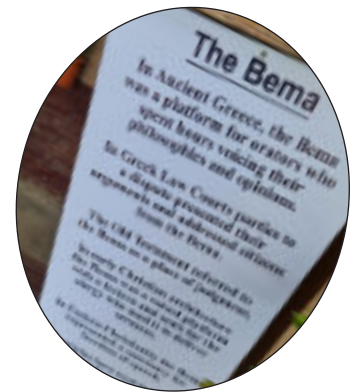
Under the watchful eye of Salochana Devi, who has been with the university for nine years, the staff at Bema Cino provide students and staff with healthy snacks/meal alternatives and freshly brewed coffee. With a fully vegetarian menu, Bema Cino is a great place for students to find a quick snack before their next lecture or while completing their work with



LEFT:

Salochna Devi and colleague Krishneel Kumar, ready to serve.

RIGHT: The podium at the cafe from where students can express their views



friends. Bema Cino's employees are warm and welcoming, as well as properly trained in health, hygiene and customer service.

The university's first Bema Cino opened in 2019 on the Samabula campus, followed by one later on the Saweni campus. The cafe is based on the Bema concept, which was used in ancient Greece as a platform for free speech. The

law school first constructed a bema, and subsequently the concept of a café arose.

The Vice-Chancellor, Shaista Shameen, said the university wanted to make sure employees and students have a healthy meal option, and Bema Cino Café ensures everyone has a choice of excellent, healthy refreshments. Its offerings include a variety of coffees as well and

sweet and savoury dishes such as sandwiches, wraps, samosa and cupcakes.

It is waiting for the Ba campus café to open before it decides on a set menu.

Bema Cino gets all its produce fresh from local markets. And, once the university's organic garden is up and running (See "Green" report on Page 3), the cafe hopes it will be able to get its produce from there.

## The Editorial Team

THIS first semester of the new journalism course has been a busy one.

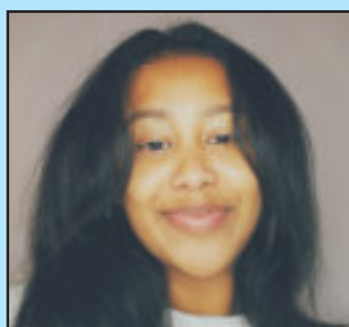
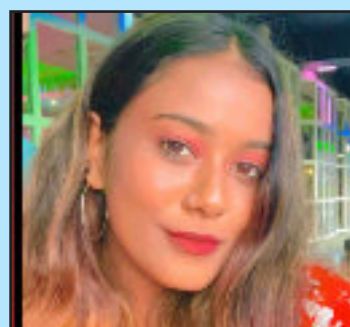
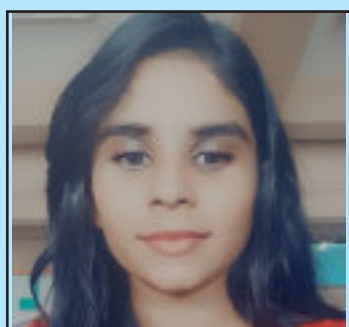
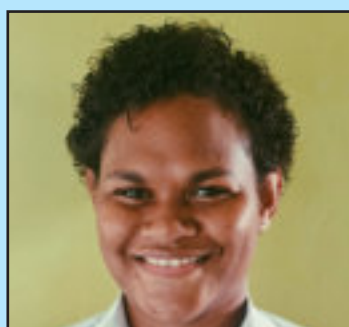
Students have looked at theories of journalism, how newspapers evolved, how they have retained their influence and how they are surviving in a digital age.

But most importantly they have been learning how to find stories and then tell that

story to their readers, listeners and viewers. They have sat in digital classrooms, practised interviewing each other, and gone out into the real world to interview people and tell their stories

And they spent time in real newsrooms – thanks to the Fiji Sun – to see how real reporters do their jobs.

And finally this first cohort of journalism students – Virisila Enikosuna, who acted as editor, and Simran Dass, Seran Devi, Rishika Chand, and Shaniyah Khan – have worked hard to show how they can put their new skills to work to prepare and publish this newspaper – in time-tested print, and online for a changing digital world.



From left, Virisila Enikosuna, the editor, Simran Dass, Seran Devi, Rishika Chand, and Shaniyah Khan