



# The Fiji Association in Auckland (Inc)

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New Zealand

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## La Fijiana, Vol 38 No 1, August 2011

Official Newsletter of the Fiji Association in Auckland Inc.

### PASSING OF MR SANT RAJ RAI, JP

Mr. Sant Raj Rai passed away recently, while on holiday in Fiji. He was a Life Member of the Association. Mr. Rai was accorded a memorial service at the Girit Centre in Lautoka before being flown back to Auckland for cremation. His funeral service was held at the Manukau Memorial Garden Crematorium, attended by a very large congregation, which included many members of the Association. Speaking at the service, Mr. Pravindra Singh offered the apology of Dr Satendra Singh, whom Mr. Rai had requested to be a speaker along with Hon Phil Goff, in prior instructions. Dr Singh was away in Fiji on behalf of the association, concluding the essay competition prize giving, which could not be cancelled. Mr. Pravindra Singh said Mr. Rai had been a powerful influence in our community, particularly the Association, which he supported by attending functions regularly. He last attended the Indian Dinner and AGM just some weeks ago, where he brought much merriment in singing his well known song 'Merri Jaan', which in hindsight became Mr. Rai's farewell to members. He was looking forward to the Association's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in eighteen months, and spoke warmly of ideas to celebrate the occasion.

Mr. Rai was born in Fiji, studied at Natabua High School, joined the Colonial Civil Service and rose to become an Acting District Commissioner. His popular roles as District Officer took him to many remote parts of Fiji, where he became a well known name among the Fijian communities. Mr Rai was a close friend of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara and other Fijian leaders in the transition period to Fiji's independence, something which Dr Satendra Singh recalled at Mr. Rai's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party last year.

He traveled often and together with Mrs Rai, went to visit Shri Satya Sai Baba several times. Mr. and Mrs Rai also met Mother Teresa during a visit to India.

The Chairperson of the Association, Mrs Shona Kamath said "We lost a great icon of the Association, someone who always stood firmly on behalf of our aims. Mr. Rai will be sadly missed. The Association marked his passing by placing a wreath on his casket, complete with the colours of the two flags that he loved most – Fiji and New Zealand."



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## **TABUA CEREMONY – AUCKLAND AND SUVA**

On 26 July, Their Excellencies, Sir Anand Satyanand and Lady Susan Satyanand hosted a reception at Government House Auckland, to say farewell and to return the Kamunaqa or Tabua which the Association presented to him at the commencement of his term in 2006.

At His Excellency's request, the Tabua and a Plaque given by Government House, were presented to the New Zealand High Commission Suva by Dr Satendra Singh and Lady June Hillary.

The Plaque notes that the Tabua was presented by the Fiji Association to commemorate the close links of the Governor General with Fiji. It now commemorates the term in office by Sir Anand, and will remain at the New Zealand High Commission, as custodian.

The Auckland reception at Government House opened with a traditional cava ceremony after which Indian ceremonies were offered, to farewell Sir Anand and Lady Susan.

In his address, the Governor General thanked the Association for the Tabua, its connections and significance, and paid tribute to many people whose presence linked NZ and Fiji in many areas, including education and missionary work in a by gone era.

The Association presented Sir Anand with a carved elephant book holder and Lady Susan with a Fijian album.

At the conclusion of the reception, Sir Anand surprised guests by leading the singing of Isa Lei with such fervor, there were some tears shed.

The Suva reception to receive the Tabua was held at the official residence of the High Commissioner. Fijian staff presented a cava ceremony and other salutations to the Kamunaqa in accordance with custom. Guests included the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum and the High Commissioner of India.

The Association records its gratitude to Sir Anand and Lady Susan Satyanand and takes this opportunity of wishing them well for their future.



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## ICCR 40<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

The Indian Cultural Centre, Suva is marking its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Association has had a close link going back to numerous teachers, directors and students. Several groups of ICC artists have visited Auckland under the sponsorship of the Association, or jointly with the High Commission of India in Suva. The ICC is the cultural arm of the Indian High Commission. We offer our very best wishes to the current High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr. Vinod Kumar and the current Director of the Centre, Dr Kamal Mishra. The Centre is now under the tutorship of locally trained teachers, with two schools, one in Suva and one in Lautoka.

The Association looks forward to opportunities to share programs.

## KARAOKE NIGHT

A successful Indian Karaoke night was held in South Auckland. Our grateful thanks to Mr. Pravindra Singh as well as Dr Raj for the set up and songs...it was a memorable event.

## 40<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIJI ASSOCIATION

The Committee will be considering ways of marking this land-mark event, which comes in eighteen months. If you have any suggestions, please contact us.

## SUBS

Current annual subs (\$20) are due. If you have not paid the current subs, please do so as newsletters will only be sent to members who are paid up. This policy was adopted some years back, with the committee making it a matter of courtesy to now and then, forward a copy to members who might just have forgotten. However, no newsletters are sent if your subs have not been paid for over two years.

Subs Return Form

Name.....

Address.....

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Post to: FIJI ASSOCIATION IN AUCKLAND, P O BOX 19333, AVONDALE, AUCKLAND 1746