



High Commission of the Republic of the Fiji Islands London

RECREATION & SPORTS

Sport, with its intrinsic values, plays an important role in nation building program. It provides lucrative employment opportunities and promotes Fiji as a tourist destination. Fiji is gaining an increasing reputation for hosting a range of sporting events. The Government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports together with the Fiji Sports Council and the Institute of Sports is pursuing the provision of "sports for all" by the year 2000 - placing special emphasis on excellence. In 2003 Fiji will be hosting the South Pacific Games. Government has set aside \$10 million over the next five years, to finance the necessary infrastructure and facilities. In order to supplement this large public contribution, government is also setting up a South Pacific Games Infrastructure Fund. To encourage donations to this fund, individuals and companies are entitled to a deductible allowance of 150 per cent of their contributions. There is a major drive to uplift the country's sporting image to premier status in the South Pacific region. Sporting bodies that are involved in their own development projects will be assisted and encouraged by the government. In addition to this, government has started to introduce sports development officers in various districts and in various sports to look after the development of a particular sports at all levels. Sports in Fiji also plays a vital role in bringing together people in this multiracial society, promoting racial harmony and tolerance. It has also helped promote Fiji's image regionally and internationally. The country's outstanding achievements in the rugby sevens code in Hong Kong in 1990, 1991 and 1992 have been seen as a major breakthrough in the international sporting arena. Fiji won the sevens world title (Melrose Cup) in April last year repeated by the winning of the sevens series again this year. Fiji rugby is praised highly by international rugby fans.

To further foster the development of sport, a "Sport for All" program was launched in 1996. This program promotes mass participation in physical education and sports - oriented activities for recreation, leisure, health and fitness.

In world surfing, Fiji has also made an impact. Fiji's own Tony Phillip took the world by storm when he won honors in the world surfing championship in 1991. He is ranked 5th in the world. In golf too, Fiji's Vijay Singh is becoming a major attraction on the international golfing circuit and is ranked 4th. These achievements, have inspired the government and other sporting bodies to further exploit the many raw talents existing in Fiji. And already underway are

plans to boost the country's performance in sport and improve its medal prospects in the Sydney Olympics 2000. While rugby and soccer continue to be the major competitive sport played in the country, athletics is also developing steadily together with other sports rated for medal prospects in the Olympic Games. These include boxing, judo, weightlifting, swimming and board sailing. Other sports played extensively in Fiji are netball, volleyball, golf, basketball, and bowling.

FIJI SPORTS COUNCIL

The Fiji Sports Council was established by an Act of parliament in 1978 to promote and develop sport in Fiji. It is currently the main sporting body. The present government accepts that sports development must be part and parcel of national development. Sport is also an integral part of an individual's development to realize immediate and long-term social, physical, athletic, emotional and moral benefits. A balanced and well organized program of activities encourage responsible sporting attitudes and a healthy approach to lifelong recreational and sporting activities. The Fiji Sports Council has prepared a 5-year Master Plan of sports development that is envisioned to culminate with a viable and fully-functional Sport-for-All program by the Year 2000.

The Ministry through the Fiji Sports Council will pursue a Facility Development Program that should see sports facilities being developed in main centres throughout the country. In 1999, Fiji won the bid to host the 12th South Pacific Games and a master plan was developed in 1998 to guide the development of sporting facilities that would enable the country to host the year 2003 South Pacific Games. The master plan includes the upgrading and reconstruction of existing facilities such as the Laucala Bay Multi - purpose Courts, the National Gymnasium, Suva Olympic Pool and the National Stadium. The regional tennis centre at Lautoka is also part of the program and is expected to be completed within the next few months.

The Fiji Sports Council has begun the development of a sports ground in Vaileka, Ra and is also looking to the Vunidawa ground and Tavuki in Kadavu. Sport also contributes to good health and well - being of all citizens. Over the next five years, the Ministry and the Fiji Sports Council will vigorously promote Sports for All Program, which will involve all citizens regardless of age, size, gender or physical ability. The Ministry is also looking into the possibility of having a national sports day in which all facilities owned by government will be opened to the public for sporting activities throughout the day. It will be a day for families and for all communities to come together and promote the objectives of social cohesion and social integration. In addition, the Sports Academy Outreach Program, will continue to take place in rural communities. In 1994, an agreement was signed between Government and the Tattersall (Tattslotto) Company of Victoria, whereby the Company provides financial support to FSC to fund the development of sports facilities nationwide. FSC has collected over \$2 million since Tattslotto was introduced in December, 1994. Thirty five per cent of the income received from Tattslotto was spent on sports development and 65 percent was utilized for facilities

development. It is anticipated that the endeavors of the Fiji Sports Council will result in the short to medium term to an increase in the medal harvests of the country in regional sporting events, and an improvement in its international ranking.

FESTIVALS

Besides sports, Fiji is also noted for its colourful festivals, filled with fun. Easter and Christmas are of great importance to this religious country. In September Fiji's sugar city, Lautoka, comes alive with its Sugar Festival, Nadi town has its annual Bula (welcome) Festival in July, and Fiji's carnival of the year Hibiscus Festival is held in Suva during the month of August. A pretty sight which comes up every year throughout Fiji is the Hindu festival of lights, known as the Diwali festival. The island of Beqa is noted for its spectacular and exciting ritual of Fijian firewalking. The Hindu ritual of firewalking is performed by the South Indians in many of their temples.

RECREATION

The 300 islands that make up the Fiji group contain a surprising variety of sights, often of great interest and astounding natural beauty. Fiji's bigger towns and cities are abound with things to do at night. One can choose from the cinema to night clubs and restaurants. Films in both English and Hindi are shown at modern cinemas throughout the country. Downtown Boulevard, Dolphins and Macdonald's are just some of the grand recreational names. A living exhibit of Fijian history and culture can be found at the Pacific Harbor Cultural Centre in Deuba. At Orchid Island which is about fifteen minutes drive from Suva city, there is a fine collection of Fiji's plants and animals. There are a number of parks and reserves in Fiji and many of them serve as good ecotourism attractions. Some of the notable ones are Lololo/Nalowela Forest Park and reserve and the sand dunes at Sigatoka which is regarded as one of Fiji's earliest prehistoric sites. The Garden of the Sleeping Giants, located 6.5 km from Nadi International Airport, has Fiji's largest orchid collection; the island of Vatulele is famous for its red prawns and Taveuni known as the Garden Island of Fiji boasts some of the country's spectacular waterfalls, miles of white sandy beaches and the home to country's unique flower; the legendary "Tagimoucia."