

Fiji News Brief

by Jackie Kumar JP

New President - Fiji Independent Commission

Interim Attorney General Aiyaz Saiyad announced on Thursday 24th of May the appointment of Mr. Mah Weng Kwai as the new of the Fiji Independent Commission against corruption. "Mr. Kwai brings immense wealth of experience with him. He is a person of obviously international standing, he is the current president of Law Asia, and he is also a leading member of the Malaysian Bar. He has worked previously as a prosecutor, prosecuting corruption in Malaysia. He is also a member of the international bar association. His Excellency has appointed Mr. Kwai for a period of 5 years and we look forward to him coming to Fiji very soon." Said Aiyaz Saiyad.

New Appointees - Electoral Commission

The President Ratu Josefa Iloilo has appointed M K Sahu Khan as the chairman of the Electoral Commission, and Dr Serufereti Dewa, Talei Burness, and the Reverend David Arms as Commissioners, with a fourth commission to be appointed at a later date. Saiyad Khaiyum confirmed "The constitution states that the President appoints the four of the commissioners, following advice from the prime minister who will consult the leader of opposition. The Prime Minister doesn't have a leader of opposition to consult; you need commissioners to have elections, so in order to have elections we need to appoint commissioners." Saiyad Khaiyum also confirmed that the EU has accepted this.

Mahendra Chaudhry - Elections 2010

Mahendra Chaudhry Fiji's Interim Finance Minister announced while in India recently that Fiji General Elections would be held in June 2010. India's Prime Minister Manmoham Singh would not comment directly on the issue, but said that they most important thing is that free and fair elections be held at some state. Prime Minister Singh also pledged Indian's support to continue to help Fiji's sugar sector, as well as health, human resource development, training of defense personnel and investment in tourism.

Indian Technology for Election

The next elections may see the introduction of an electronic voting system with the Government of India being prepared to assist Fiji to adopt an electronic system. The offer follows talks Mahendra Chaudhry had with India's Chief Elections Commissioner in New Delhi. Mr. Chaudhry said the adoption of electronic voting

continued from page 7

cash cows

in-hand. The lack of a paper trail allowed students to work more than the allowable 20 hours per week, but also let employers pay below the minimum wage. When asked why they accepted exploitation, students explained they had no choice: it was hard to find a decent job, while families back home were pressed to meet the monthly interest payments. Employers were often aware of this. They also knew that if one student decided not to put up with the low pay, another one would. Desperate students competed with each other, those asking the least rewarded with the extra hours necessary for survival.

The reality contrasts sharply with the Benetton ad-like multiculturalism with which Australian universities market themselves abroad. The international student market is highly competitive and universities the world over consider India a high growth market. When Australian Prime Minister John Howard recently visited India, he stated, "the deep association between [India and Australia], the growing

machines would eliminate the problem of electoral fraud and invalid votes.

Suncourt Director - Bail \$10,000

The Suva Magistrate Court granted bail of \$10,000 dollars on Tuesday 22nd May on Suncourt Director Dhansuklal Bhika who has been charged with Conspiracy to Commit Felony.

The court heard that between 2000 and 2001, Bhika and his co accused who is also his brother Gulam Bhika committed the offence worth around \$3 million dollars.

Magistrate Aruna Prasad granted bail to Bhika and told him to reappear on the 24th of June for mention. Bhika has been asked to release his passport to the court, and not to interfere with witnesses. Bhika has pleaded not guilty to the offence.

Army Advise - Don't be alarmed by soldiers

A stronger than normal Army presence raised eyebrows around central Suva last week with the Military holding a two day arms skills exercise, the Military spokesman Major Neumi Leweni released a statement prior to the exercise forewarning people of the increased Army Presence and saying that the exercise was part of the Military's Inter Company Skills at Arms Competition. The purpose is to gauge the physical condition and knowledge of the troops.

Army vs. Internet

Fiji's Military have won the battle of the Internet; the Military have succeeded in blocking a malicious web page that contained damaging allegations against army officers and members of the interim Government. Access from within Fiji to the website blog was blocked with attempts being redirected to the Google search engine.

Guns for Hire

United Nations Working Group is concerned that former Fijian Military personnel are being recruited by Overseas Private Security Companies to act as Mercenaries exploited and endangered in situations of violence and armed conflict. The UN Working Group would like Fiji to develop Legislation to stop this practice.

Fiji Dollar still a Dollar

Mr. Sada Reddy the Deputy Governor of The Reserve Bank of Fiji stated that "There is no intention to devalue the Fiji dollar," this reassurance came on the 17th of May amidst speculation that a devaluation could salvage that economy.

commercial links, the greatly enhanced political dialogue, the extraordinary growth of the Indian economy - all of these things bode well for an increase in the flow of students.⁴ That's exactly what Australian universities are hoping for, as China develops its own education industry, and the number of students from traditional markets such as Malaysia and Singapore level off. As is clear to most in the industry, Indian student enrolment largely depends on their eligibility for residency after graduation. Many Indian students now realise the difficulties, but many still hope that the rules will change in their favour or that new opportunities will present themselves once they reach Australia. This hope is something the industry likes to keep alive. The Melbourne campus of the University of Ballarat now offers a six-month course to become a certified Hindi translator. By successfully completing the course, a student earns five migration points.⁵ Education agents will undoubtedly know how to inform their clients of this opportunity.

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Pakistan unrest & nuclear security

By Alex Stolar

On May 12, over forty people died when violence broke out in Karachi between political factions supporting and opposing President Musharraf. Three days later, a suicide bomber entered a hotel restaurant in Peshawar and detonated the explosives strapped to his body, killing at least 20 persons. Recent turbulence has renewed fears that Pakistan's nuclear weapons and materials may be vulnerable to breakdowns in command and control or theft. The good news is that these nightmare scenarios are unlikely to occur during the current political unrest. The bad news is that Pakistan's domestic unrest will continue and grow worse without the restoration of a representative government, and that extremists have many ways to further destabilise Pakistan.

Are Pakistan's bombs safe? In theory, Pakistan's nuclear weapons could be vulnerable to theft, illicit transfer, or unintentional use if the army's discipline and command and control structure faltered. Concerns about the security of Pakistan's weapons are greatest in the west when Pakistani politics enter a rough patch and during leadership changes.

Fortunately, these worst case scenarios are highly unlikely. Pakistan has been through worse passages of political unrest. Intimidation, politically-driven violence, and sectarian strife are all too common in Pakistani politics. If past experience is any guide, the current unrest will not lead to anarchy or chaos in Pakistan. The vast majority of Pakistanis desire a moderate and stable state, and the army has an institutional interest to prevent the breakdown of national authority and cohesion. Pakistan's weapons were secure during previous periods of political instability, and they are likely to remain the most protected national assets during the current unrest. There are no signs of a breakdown in command and control in the Pakistan Army.

After the security leakages associated with A Q Khan, Pakistan's military leadership took important steps to establish improved safety and security practices. Pakistan's military authorities and civilian leaders also established a robust nuclear command and control structure after testing weapons in 1998. Today, the military's Strategic Plans Division devotes over 8,000 men, mostly undercover, to protecting Pakistan's weapons and fissile material. The Pakistani military is a highly capable and professional force. It is highly improbable that it would hand over its crown jewels to individuals or organisations that it cannot control during this period of unrest.

It is equally unlikely that terrorists would be able to steal Pakistani nuclear weapons or fissile material. It is true that the fiat of the Pakistani state is being challenged throughout Pakistan, and especially in the tribal regions bordering Afghanistan. In the

most troubled regions, police and military forces are struggling to maintain order. However, the installations that house Pakistan's nuclear weapons and fissile material, as would be expected, are heavily guarded and among the most secure facilities in all of Pakistan.

Similarly, fears that the current unrest could lead to a takeover of the Pakistani government by extremists are also misplaced. Religious parties are an important element of Pakistani society, but their political clout remains limited. It is unlikely that religious parties could engineer a takeover of the Pakistani government, as they lack both the popular support and the military power that would be required. The political power of religious parties would be further diminished if General Pervez Musharraf would remove the shackles from the two major political parties in Pakistan that do not define themselves in religious terms.

Unfortunately, unfounded fears about Pakistan's nuclear weapons have obscured more pressing threats. Radiological terrorism in Pakistan, as elsewhere, is possible. To conduct an act of radiological terrorism, extremists would need to fashion a radiological dispersal device (RDD) which consists of little more than conventional explosives and radiological materials that can be found in laboratories and hospitals. Though an RDD would cause a few deaths, it could contaminate a large swath of land and stretch Pakistan's emergency response capabilities.

Extremists, however, need not resort to RDDs to wreak havoc and instil fear. As recent bombings have illustrated, detonating conventional explosives in a crowded area suffices to cause extraordinary suffering.

With each bombing, President Musharraf's vision of an enlightened and moderate Pakistan seems more illusive. The unravelling of Musharraf's vision of enlightened moderation was not unpredictable. For far too long, Musharraf has avoided making hard choices on the most pressing problems which confront Pakistan -- on madressah reform, militancy in Kashmir, the resurgence of the Taliban, and democracy.

Musharraf is now entering a critical period, and he faces very difficult choices about his future and the future of Pakistan. While most alarmist predictions about the security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons are unlikely to materialise, instability is likely to increase unless Musharraf redirects the Pakistani ship of state.

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India willing help in Fiji's recovery

INDIA is willing to assist in Fiji's economy recovery, according to India Finance Minister Shri P Chidambaram.

Mr Chidambaram gave his Fiji counterpart Mahendra Chaudhry this assurance during a meeting in New Dehli, India this week. According to a statement from Fiji's Information Ministry, Mr Chidambaram stressed on the need to ensure fairness on the election process.

Mr Chaudhry elaborated on the process necessary to be carried out before credible elections could be held.

The minister was briefed by Mr Chaudhry

on the state of Fiji's sugar and tourism industries and measures being taken by the interim government to rehabilitate these important sectors of the economy. The Indian Finance Minister assured Mr Chaudhry of India's support and assistance in restoring these industries, in particular, by encouraging Indian investors to undertake tourism development projects in Fiji.

Mr Chaudhry who is on a official visit to India also had a meeting with the Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (Indian Council for International Cooperation).