

Economy offers rich commercial opportunities

Wenceslaus Anthony

I was fortunate to be a part of a business delegation that visited Fiji from March 18 to 22, 2013. Organised by Mere Toora, Acting Head of Fiji's Diplomatic Mission in Wellington in association with the Pacific Islands Trade & Invest, it comprised 11 members representing varied business interests.

It was my first visit to Fiji – a visit that would hopefully lead to many more, each accruing good results, promoting trade and commerce between New Zealand and Fiji and bringing together businesses and people.

The Delegation, which included Harish Lodhia, Honorary Consul for Fiji based in Auckland, was representative of various sectors of the New Zealand economy, including manufacturing, trading, finance, property development, forestry, consultancy, hospitality and retailing.

Infrastructure development

During a meeting with the delegation, Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama spoke about the economic performance of the Government of Fiji and that infrastructure investment was being addressed on priority.

"We are providing the right atmosphere for investment in Fiji. Our Investment policies are non-discriminatory and do not disadvantage anyone on the basis of nationality, religion or creed. Investors are protected on issues such as acquisition of property, repatriation of profits and other policies of the Reserve Bank of Fiji," he said.

At another meeting, Attorney-General and Minister for Industry and Trade Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum said that investments based on policy-driven issues would be useful for the Fijian economy and that industries should take advantage of the incentives available in the Pacific region.

Emerging opportunities

Alrina Ali, Manager (Trade Promotions) of Investment Fiji, spoke on Trade and Investment Opportunities in Fiji. Nanise Masau, Principal Tourism Officer outlined the Challenges and Opportunities in the Tourism Industry. David Balenacagi, Principal Analyst at the Fiji Revenue & Customs Authority spoke on investment incentives, while Ariff Ali spoke on Funding Structures and Financing.

Flour Mills of Fiji Chief Executive Ram Bajekal spoke on the Challenges and Opportunities in the manufacturing sector. Kalpesh Solanki, President of the Fiji Textile Clothing and Footwear Council of Fiji spoke on opportunities in the Garment Industry.

Direct contacts

Shaheen Ali, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Industry & Trade, was the keynote speaker at another set of meetings.

Describing the various opportunities available for foreign investors and former Fiji citizens, he said that businesses can interact directly with businesses in Fiji and find out from them about the environment and policies being formulated to create confidence and long-term stability and growth.

We had the benefit of direct input from officials of the Reserve Bank of Fiji, Immigration Department, various ministries including Finance, Agriculture & Forestry and the Real Estate Board. They answered a number of questions relating to investment in Fiji and doing business in a number of sectors.

Peter Lund, New Zealand Trade Commissioner in Fiji mentioned that some of the road works in Fiji are being done by New Zealand Companies (*Indian Newslink, July 1, 2013*).

The delegates also visited a number of industries, including Mind Pearl, United Apparel, Joes Farm, Pure Fiji, Damodar City Centre Food Processors, Flour Mills of Fiji- and Kalabu Export Zone.

A few of us called on India's High

Commissioner to Fiji Vinod Kumar, who explained the expertise from India in Healthcare, Agro Processing and Hospitality. We also met First Secretary J S Rana, officials of the Fiji India Business Council and Education Minister Filipe N Bole.

Wenceslaus Antony is the Chairman & Managing Director of WAML Group Limited based in Auckland. He is seen here (second from left) Patton New Zealand Limited Global Chief Executive Sameer Handa, New Zealand Trade Commissioner Peter Lund and Pacific Islands Trade & Invest Chief Operating Officer and Head of Investments Manuel Valdez.



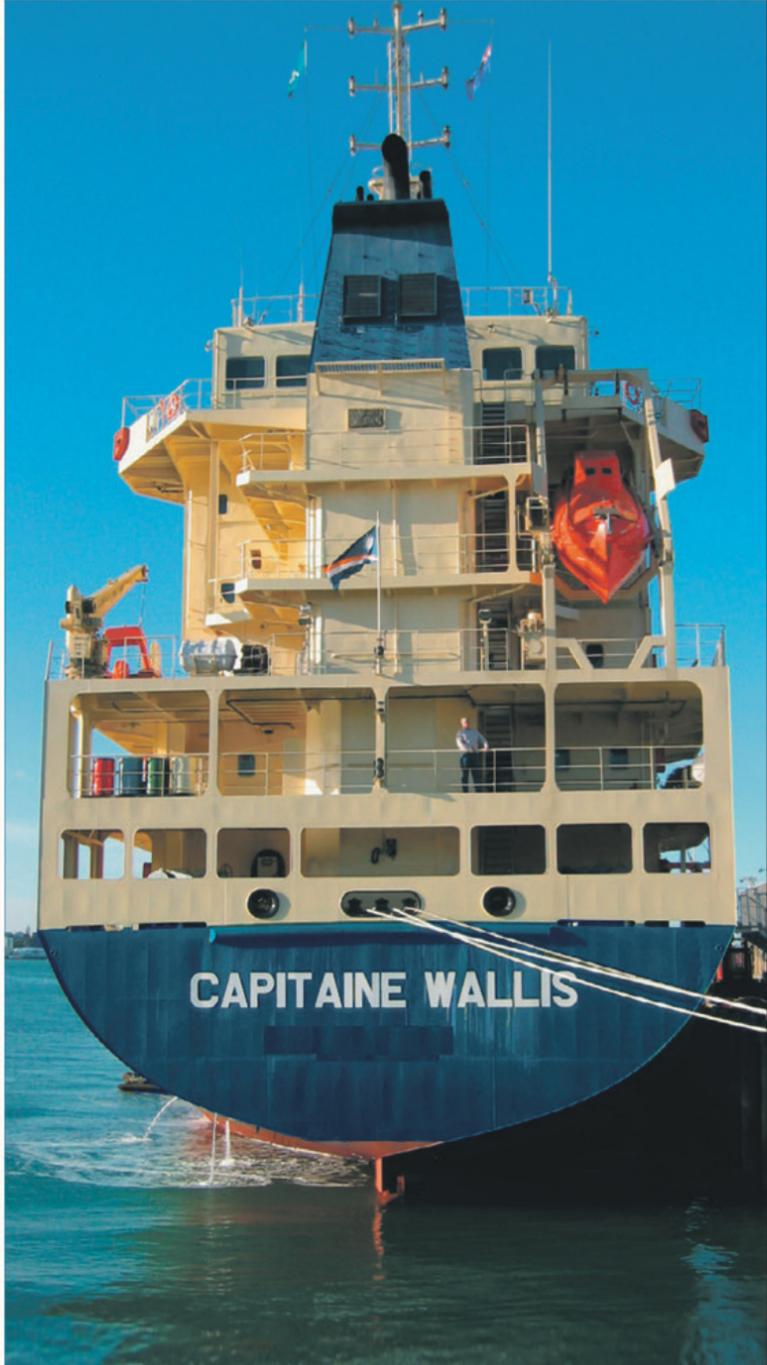


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AUSTRALIA
Neptune Pacific Agency Australia Pty Ltd
ACN 128 149 280
Level 12, 45 – 47 York Street,
Sydney NSW 2000
PO Box 3813 Sydney NSW 2001 Australia
Phone +61 2 9235 2999
Fax +61 2 9235 2912

NEW ZEALAND
Neptune Pacific Agency Australia Pty Ltd
New Zealand Branch
Level 12, AFFCO House,
12 – 26 Swanson Street, Auckland 1010
PO Box 3291 Shortland Street,
Auckland 1140 New Zealand
Phone +649 302 5360
Fax +649 302 5361

FIJI
NPT Agency
Level 3, Ra Marama House,
91 Gordon Street, Suva
PO Box 36 Suva Fiji
Phone +679 3304 528
Fax +679 330 0057 / 331 6360

www.neptunepacificline.com