

# Rich potential appeases business delegation

Venkat Raman

Investment in commercial and industrial ventures, agriculture, dairy, trade, food, fast moving consumer goods and real estate were among the sectors of interest for a group of businesspersons that visited Fiji last fortnight.

The 12-member delegation, led by Harish Lodhia, Fiji's Honorary Consul in Auckland, included 10 investors and entrepreneurs who explored opportunities to invest in Fiji companies and projects, and sign trade and distribution agreements.

Robert Khan, Managing Director of Radio Tarana, New Zealand's premier Indian radio station, was also a major facilitator of the visit, serving as a vital link between the Fijian Government and New Zealand businesses.

The delegation was in Fiji from July 30 to August 4.

"Fijian Government is keen to welcome back its former citizens who have done well in many parts of the world including New Zealand. They are excited about the developments taking place in Fiji and with dual citizenship, Fijians feel encouraged to invest in their homeland and become true partners in the economic and industrial development of Fiji," Mr Lodhia said.

### Facilities & Benefits

He said that the members of the delegation were made aware of the several incentives including tax holidays, reduced duty and other benefits available to foreign and local investors.

"They are aware that Prime Minister Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama is committed to establishing a democratically elected Government through free and fair election in 2014

and promote political stability in Fiji. They also know that he is keen to see an increasing number of former citizens playing an active role in furthering a strong economy," Mr Lodhia said.

Mr Khan had organised, along with Mr Lodhia, person-to-person meetings with commercial and industrial organisations, ministries, Government officials and people of interest specific to the visiting businesspersons and also have a 'unique Fiji experience.'

"Following expression of interest by New Zealand companies and entrepreneurs, we were able to finalise the extent and scope of the delegation and determine their areas of interest in Fiji. We organised meetings for them in Nadi, Suva and other places. We are happy that most of them were able to entertain constructive engagement with the Government and businesses in Fiji," he said.

### Win-win for all

Mr Khan said that the single most important consideration was to understand the needs of the visiting businesspersons and make appropriate arrangements so that they make effective use of the time and opportunities at their disposal.

"The delegates met their own costs of travel and accommodation. Apart from meeting ministers, officials of Reserve Bank, Investment Fiji, Customs and other departments, the local media and officials of the Fiji Retailers Association, they had one-to-one meetings with their prospective business partners. This was a working mission, useful for the members of the delegation," Mr Khan said.

### Harish Lodhia



Who leads the Business Delegation, is the Honorary Consul of the Government of Fiji based in Auckland. Since his appointment last year, he has been actively involved in promoting the interests of his home country, apprising people of the development and investment opportunities in Fiji and arranging visits of business delegations to Fiji. He is a Director of many companies including Sona Sansaar (Mt Roskill and Papatoetoe), Sakhi (saree showrooms), Fortune Marketing, Magic Foods, Jyoti Communications (which owns the 1386 AM frequency) and Tulja Properties. He is also Justice of the Peace.  
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### Robert Khan



An entrepreneur with an innovative spirit, Robert Khan is the architect behind the solid structure of Radio Tarana. As the owner, Managing Director and Chief Executive of Radio

Tarana, he is the leader of a highly motivated team of professionals who have made the radio station the highest rated Indian and ethnic broadcaster in New Zealand. Mr Khan is a Member of the Auckland Council Business Advisory Board, Small Business Development Group (of the Central Government), and New Zealand Fiji Football and the White Ribbon Ambassador. Earlier, he was a Member on the Waitemata District Health Board (he was the first person of Fijian origin to be appointed to these Boards) and the Board of Friends of Fiji Heart Foundation. Email: Robert@tarana.co.nz

### Alkesh Sharma



His soft-touch and well-mannered qualities make him a welcome member of any group, which is how and why Alkesh Sharma has earned a reputation for negotiating business contracts with goodwill attached. He was in his elements in Fiji and no one could tell that it was his maiden visit. He returned home with a file filled with contacts and potential agreements and a heart filled with hope. A qualified food technologist, Mr Sharma has played a key role in manufacturing and supply chain management functions in internationally recognised companies in India, Nepal, Zambia, Saudi Arabia and New Zealand. He is currently with Brooke Holdings Limited, a large company dealing in food products.  
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### Feroz Ali



Feroz Ali personifies the typical Fijian trait of combining business with fun and helping anyone succeed, even if it means typing a draft agreement for a delegate on a friend's computer. His youthful exuberance is well matched with business acumen, and the serious man that he is at meetings, transforms himself into a prankster at dusk, much to the delight of even his victims! Mr Ali is the Chief Executive of New Zealand Career College, one of the most progressive

educational institutions and Private Training Establishments in New Zealand. Under his dynamic leadership, the College continues to grow, providing educational opportunities to students at its four campuses in Auckland and at its Wellington Campus that specialises in Early Childhood Education.  
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### Jai Prakash



He can tell you the likes and otherwise of film stars such as Shah Rukh Khan and how fast their moods can change; for, Jai Prakash was a chef at Crowne Plaza Hotel in Auckland City for ten years, during which

he worked hard, saved enough to bring his family including parents, brothers and sister to New Zealand. A few years ago, he established Royal Global Marketing & Distributors (NZ) Limited. The company that has been exporting car parts to Fiji. His dynamism and urge to grow encouraged him to form recently 'City Promotional Signage,' to utilise the immense potential available in Suva.

Mr Prakash has acquired more than 1100 Sq metres of land in Suva, hoping to establish a Dialysis Centre and offer related services at special rates to the poor people in Fiji. He is keen to take his export business to a higher level.  
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### Mahesh Reddy



For more than 30 years, he has been an Industrial Chemist, with expertise in food technology and products.

His sense of humour goes longer than that, for Mahesh Reddy believes that those who cannot laugh are wasting their time in this beautiful world. "Everyone should have a sense of humour, because life is for living and spreading goodwill," he says. Born and educated in Ba, Mr Reddy has a natural flair for soccer, with added interest in Tennis. He was in Fiji to explore possibilities of investing in agriculture. "I hope to settle down in Nadi region in the next two years. Fiji is my home and I am eager to return to my roots," Mr Reddy said.

### Manuel Valdez



Seventeen years of employment as an Economist, Chief Economist and Vice-President at the Development Bank of Philippines in his home country brought professional

satisfaction to Manuel Valdez and by 2006, he was ready to migrate to New Zealand for 'fresh and interesting opportunity.' That opportunity knocked at his door and joining the Pacific Islands Trade & Invest as its Chief Operating Officer and Head of Investments, he has the innate ability to connect people in 14 Pacific Island countries and see them grow as investors, suppliers, importers, exporters, traders, academics and other professionals. "I was happy and proud that I was able to facilitate real estate investment of \$1.5 million in Samoa during my first year of appointment," he said. He leads inward investment initiatives into the Pacific Islands. He has led several 'Return to Roots' missions encouraging Pacific Islanders living outside the region to invest in their countries of origin.

"Fiji is the hub of the Pacific," Mr Valdez said.  
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