

PRESS RELEASE



Fiji TRC Joins Labasa's Gimit Commemoration in Powerful Call for Unity and Healing

Monday, 12 May 2025: As hundreds gathered in Labasa to honour the 146th Gimit Commemoration, the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission (FTRC) stood in solidarity, bringing truth-telling and national healing to the forefront of dialogue.

At the invitation of the Ministry of Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry, FTRC Chair Marcus Brand and Commissioners Sekove Naqiolevu and Rajendra Dass joined the event with staff members, offering face-to-face engagement at an informative display booth.

Mr Brand, on his first visit to Labasa, described the experience as powerful and inspiring.

“The quality of the cultural performances on the first day reflected the vibrancy and authenticity of Indo-Fijian identity, which is a significant asset to Fiji’s cultural legacy,” he said.

“I was especially moved by the presence of senior Gimit survivors and the powerful oratory of local high school students.”

The event's theme, "Preserving the Past, Envisioning the Future," resonates deeply with the core mission of the FTRC, as emphasised by Mr Brand, who noted that the Commission's work is centered on reflecting truthfully at past traumatic events with the purpose of healing and reconciliation as well as building stronger social cohesion.

“During conversations with attendees at our booth, I was reminded of the critical importance of direct, in-person engagement in effectively conveying our message. While we have valuable written resources, it is through face-to-face interactions that trust and understanding are truly cultivated.”

He also commended senior government officials for reaffirming Fiji’s dedication to its multiethnic identity and for honouring the vital contributions of Indo-Fijians, including descendants of the 60,000 Gimityas from British India, to the nation’s economy, society, and culture.

Mr Brand noted the contrast between Labasa's historical roots and its modern development.

"This marks my first visit to Labasa, the vibrant hub of the North. The town exudes a warm and welcoming atmosphere, with residents readily engaging in conversation and extending invitations to share their homes," he remarked.

Mr Brand highlighted that the lasting legacy of the colonial-era sugar industry is still evident, notably in the historic and iconic sugar train rail bridge.

"However, with key developments such as the new Damodar Mall and the expansion of the airport, Labasa is experiencing significant economic growth," he noted.

"With sustained investment and strong local leadership, the town is on track to evolve into a dynamic, modern hub that will attract many.

"I am confident that we will return soon to further explore this multicultural and multilingual community and its rich history," Mr Brand said.

The team visited a sugarcane plantation and the Naag Mandir in Nagigi, just outside Labasa.

Initially scheduled for May 10 to May 12 at Subrail Park, Labasa, the event was affected by adverse weather conditions, resulting in the cancellation of the official Sunday evening program.

Over its two-day duration, which officially concluded today (Monday, May 12), the event attracted a diverse and distinguished audience, including members of the diplomatic corps, cabinet ministers, senior government officials, prominent leaders from the corporate and community sectors, as well as members of the public, many of whom visited the FTRC information booth.

About FTRC:

The FTRC is an independent entity set up for truth-telling, reconciliation, and national healing. The mandate of the FTRC is to examine past political upheavals and their impact on people's lives. The Commission is looking at the physical and emotional harm, loss of life and property, and systemic injustices on people.

The purpose of this work is to foster unity and social cohesion in a society where everyone feels safe, equal, included and able to thrive. The Commission seeks to honour the lived experiences of survivors by providing a platform for voices to be heard, validated, and acknowledged.

The Commission emphasises that truth-telling is not about retribution. It is about recognition, healing, to ensure that history is not repeated. Through reconciliation, the

Commission aims to build a stronger, more just, and peaceful Fiji for future generations.

Note: The Commission is encouraging members of the public to contact us in relation to any of the above. We look forward to hearing from you. Reach us by phone, email, or through our Facebook page, where a contact form is also available.

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