

New Chief Executive Officer for Ports

THE new CEO of Ports, Mr Vajiira Piyasena has returned to Fiji with “fond memories” of the country and its people, bringing 25 years of experience in the maritime sector to his new position

Six years ago, Mr Piyasena was Head of the Marine Engineering Department at the then Fiji Institute of Technology. He returns, to Ports, where he believes that he can “contribute to the Port’s goal to be the hub of the Pacific.

“I am working with the Senior Management Team, consulting with them on mid- and long-term goals, already identified in the Corporate Plan, and to meet our targets



Mr. Vajiira Piyasena.

and work towards achieving business excellence.

“If we say we are providing world class port services, we must ensure that our

resources and the entire organisation are aligned in order to continue delivering this service.

“There are exciting developments taking place globally in the realm of ports’ management, and ICT (Information Communication Technology), is crucial in improving all of Ports’ functions.

“We can adopt a suitable change management model for Ports, and still achieve our goals of world-class excellence in a way that is appropriate to Fiji culturally, socially and economically, in a way that fits into our system,” concluded Mr Piyasena.

Ports - an overview

HANDLING more than 95% of the nation’s trade in terms of imports and exports, Fiji Ports is a major strategic asset of our economy.

With a total containerised cargo throughput of 86,863 TEU in a 12-month period, and handling more than 3.4 million revenue tonnes a year, Fiji Ports is an important trading gateway into the Pacific.

More than 60 cruise liners and 800-plus cargo-carrying vessels are amongst the 1,500 foreign-going vessels that call each year to Fiji’s major ports of entry, Suva and Lautoka.

Approximately 40% of all commodity trade handled annually by Ports is exported, showing the vital role Ports plays in supporting Fiji’s economy.

Not only does Ports directly employ more than 400 people overall, including its subsidiary companies, but it also generates employment indirectly for thousands of people in the maritime and related industries in Fiji.

Fiji Ports also contributes financially in supporting the Government via the payment of taxes and dividends, totaling more than \$10 million over the five years since the establishment of the company in 2005.

Muaiwalu Jetty opens up the islands

NOT only does Fiji Ports Corporation Limited (FPCL) pride itself on being the ‘hub of the Pacific’, but the Company also plays an important role in maintaining vital passenger and cargo links with Fiji’s outer islands.

Vessels that serve Kadavu, Vanua Levu, the Lau and Lomaiviti groups, Beqa, Mamanuca, Yasawa, and Rotuma now load and off-load passengers and cargo at the newly-constructed concrete wharf that sees the facility extended by 3,150 square metres.

The recent upgrading of the Muaiwalu Jetty, at a cost of \$1.5 million dollars, for the benefit of the local shipping industry is a part of FPCL’s community service obligation.

Built of concrete that will



The new Muaiwalu Jetty fully operational.

withstand 93-tonne axel-loads, the 110 by 45 metre Muaiwalu Jetty has been constructed on reclaimed land that was previously a gravel foreshore area.

There is ample space for the development of a secure car park, for passengers who wish to leave their vehicles at the wharf whilst taking a trip to one of the

outlying islands.

In the interests of safety, security and passenger comfort, a new waiting area has been constructed outside the Muaiwalu Jetty area. Alongside the Ticketing Office, there is an area with seats, and seven food outlets provide passengers with a variety of culinary options while waiting to embark.

Plans for 'derelicts' removal underway

WHEN derelict ships are mentioned, images of rusting hulks, long-abandoned and partially submerged come to mind.

"While this may be the case in some circumstances, in Fiji the definition of a derelict ship is any vessel that is abandoned in a port or harbour for a period of 21 days, and has insufficient manpower on board to operate," explained Captain Jeke Vakararawa, Senior Ports Facility Security Officer.

Captain Jeke said that the Seaport Management Act 2005, provides the Ports Authority with legal procedures to identify as derelict, and then impound, a vessel that meets the above criteria.

"Often a vessel will come in to the Suva harbour, seemingly for repairs. The owner pays and



98% of vessels classified as derelict are fishing boats.

dismisses the crew, then flies out of the country, after leaving the ship in the care of an agent."

"It is important that the owner of any vessel is made fully aware of the process that is taking place, and this, as well as the whole legal process, can be lengthy," said Captain Jeke.

Captain Jeke said that as many as 98% of vessels classified as derelict are fishing boats whose owners have acquired a fishing license from a South Pacific country that has an 'open register', making registration easier than it would be in Fiji.

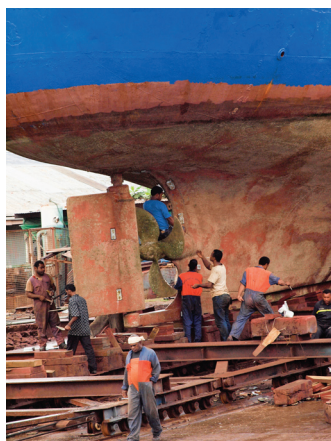
As a part of the process, a maritime surveyor assesses abandoned vessels' seaworthiness.

Following the legal process made possible by the Seaport Management Act, Fiji Ports has been able to sell four seaworthy vessels, and more than ten as scrap metal.

As the Act gives Ports the power to order the removal of any derelict that poses a danger to other shipping, a further three such vessels have been scuttled in deep water, after the maritime surveyor confirmed that nothing of monetary value remained.

"Safety is of paramount importance. We cannot afford to slow down or endanger any other vessels entering or leaving port by having derelicts in the way," concluded Captain Jeke.

Slipways serves regional shipping



The Slipway is in constant use with plans for its expansion.



SITUATED at Walu Bay in Suva, Fiji Ships & Heavy Industries Limited (FSHIL) continues to make a major contribution to regional maritime industries, a contribution that harks back to the 1920s, when, as the appropriately named Boatshed, the company built ships of New Zealand kauri.

Although some work with timber decking is still performed, the 21st century emphasis is on the three

main divisions of slipway, engineering and steel.

Work Supervisor Mr Matai Vasu, who has been with the company since 1973, explained that the work carried out within these three divisions includes electrical, fitting and machining, welding and fabrication, and plumbing.

The company's four slipways cater for ships of 100, 200, 500 and 1000 tonnes.

"The majority of work carried

out on the slipway involves water blasting and painting, steel repairs, and engineering work, such as repairing propellers," said Mr Vasu.

"Before a ship comes up onto the slipway for repairs, the company's six PADI certified divers have to inspect the shape (vee or round), size and material of the hull. They also help guide the ship onto the slipway to be hauled into place.

"The slipway cradle must

be prepared with the correctly shaped blocks before the ship is hauled out of the water.

The divers also check that the ship's tonnage is as given in the ship's documentation, to avoid damage to the cradle, and danger to the workers.

"As a responsible operation, it is better to err on the side of caution."

The 84 employees of FSHIL achieve a turnaround rate of four to five days, repairing on average 12 vessels a month.

Whilst local shipping vessels make up the main part of the company's client base, government and private vessels from Tonga, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Vanuatu, and Tuvalu are also amongst those that utilise the company's repair and maintenance services.

"We also carry out work on fishing vessels. Most of these are Chinese, but there are also some Taiwanese and Japanese fishing vessels that make use of FSHIL's services," said Mr Vasu.

Levuka and Ports, a long-term marriage



Levuka's main street and a view of PAFCO and the Kings Wharf.



ONE year after the Deed of Cession was signed in 1874, that formally transferred Fiji as a Crown Colony to Great Britain, the 6th Company of the British Royal Engineers arrived in Levuka, the new colonial capital of the nation.

The Engineers were there to upgrade the town's infrastructure, badly in need of repair. They constructed much of the stonework, including the seawall, drainage ditches and bridges that still remain to this day and they completed the Queens Wharf in 1880. Combined with its history and its colonial architecture Levuka has earned it a nomination as a World Heritage site.

The new wharf reflected the growing importance of Levuka

as an international port and trading centre, serving sailing ships and inter-island traders as demand ebbed and flowed for beche-de-mer, turtle shells, coconut oil, cotton, and even pigs for the California gold rush.

Levuka's life as the colonial capital was short, because the capital moved to Suva in 1882 - the reason given at that time was limited space for expansion.

The importance of Levuka was mainly due to its safe harbour with its fringing reef and two entrances, and flourished as a stopover port for international vessels, until the end of the 1950s when shipping went elsewhere and Levuka suffered a major downturn to

its economy.

It was not until 1964 that its fortunes took a turn for the better with the opening of the Pacific Fishing Company (PAFCO). PAFCO cans skipjack tuna for a world market from fish supplied and offloaded primarily by Japanese, Chinese and Korean fishing boats

It was also the time, but a year earlier, in 1963, when Levuka was officially designated a Port of Entry by the Fiji Government, but it was not until 1979 that the Ports Authority officially took possession of the Kings Wharf.

Today Fiji Ports employs seven people on the wharf that service the occasional passenger ship, the fishing boats and inter-island traders.

Levuka is a town of firsts:

it was the site of Fiji's first newspaper, the Fiji Times founded in 1869, the Royal Hotel, a Fiji first, dating back to the 1860s; Fiji's first public school opening in 1879, its first bank, first post office, private members club, hospital, town hall, and municipal government. It also was the first place in Fiji to have a public electricity system, in 1927.

While Fiji Ports has participated in a number of initiatives in support of the town, it most recently has made a contribution of trash bins along the waterfront to remind its citizens and visitors what a treasure the town is and how important it is to keep it clean.

SENIOR Port Facility Security Officer Captain Jeke Vakararawa is committed to the security of Fiji's ports of entry.

"Our core function in Security is to protect Ports' and the clients' assets. We also look after the lives and security of the people in and around the ports, on the ships, and on the wharf," said Captain Jeke.

"After the September 11th acts of terrorism, the International Maritime Organisation brought the International Ship and Ports Security Code (ISPS) into force in 2004 for the protection of ships and ports that engage in international trade."

This international convention means that all member countries use the same documentation and procedures for ships entering and leaving international ports of entry. International ports must report and

"We are committed to Ports security"

rectify security breaches, or risk appearing on a watch list.

"It is paramount that Fiji avoids being on this list as vessel owners and captains are reluctant to visit such ports," said Captain Jeke.

Carrying out the work of protecting the security of Fiji's ports of entry are the Maritime Border Police, a specialised Fiji Police Force department and Homelink Security Limited, an internationally recognised security organisation that meets the requirements of the ISPS code.

"We are a maritime nation, with 95 to 97% of all our imports and exports coming and going by sea. We need to protect our ports so that we can trade freely with other countries," concluded Captain Jeke.



Documentation is checked before a vehicle is allowed onto the wharf.

Ports' pilots make a difference



(l-r) Captain Saiasi Buliruarua and Captain Laisiasa Gonedai, pilots for Ports.

THE staff of Ports' Pilotage Department is responsible for the safe berthing and sailing of vessels, thus contributing to the flow of goods needed to drive the economy.

"The pilots, whose job it is to assist with the safe and efficient movement of ships in and out of Fiji's ports of entry, have an intimate knowledge of local tidal and wind conditions, gained through practical experience. Any one who wishes to become a pilot must have a minimum of five years experience at sea and have attained a Class Two Seafaring Captain's license," explained Captain Saiasi Buliruarua, Ports' Harbour Master, who himself has more than twenty-two years' seafaring experience.

Pilots are not only responsible for assisting the

safe passage of ships in and out of harbours but may need to accompany a vessel from the Port of Suva to Lautoka, or from Lautoka to Suva, depending upon the ship's cargo requirements.

After bringing 30 ships in and out of the port in a six-month period, and then passing an examination, a trainee pilot qualifies as a Class Three pilot, able to guide vessels such as fishing vessels, weighing between 36 tonnes and 146 tonnes, in and out of the harbour.

Captain Sai said that after 18 months' experience, a Class Three pilot is encouraged to qualify as a Class Two Pilot, responsible for piloting vessels such as container ships and tankers weighing between 146 and 183 tonnes.

After a further 18 months, Class Two pilots can then apply to qualify as Class One, responsible for all vessels over 183 tonnes, such as cruise liners and satellite tracking ships.

Ports has four pilots stationed in Suva, and one in Lautoka, "But if there is a possibility of congestion at Lautoka, a pilot from Suva will go to help out at the Lautoka

port," said Captain Sai.

"There are also two tug boats on standby, but most modern vessels have a bow thruster, a horizontally-mounted propeller at the bow of the ship."

"With between 95 to 97% of Fiji's import and export trade coming through our sea ports of entry, it is essential that ships enter and leave safely," said Captain Sai, "We also need to avoid congestion so that ships can off-load and take on cargo efficiently."

Timekeepers train for accuracy



A timekeeper is clocking the unloading of containers.

ONE of the most important activities on Port Authority wharves is timing the work required to load and unload containers.

That was emphasised to the participants in a recent workshop on Timekeeping conducted by Anare Leweniqila at Port Authority's head office.

The course focused not

only on loading and unloading, but on all the other operations that may delay the loading/unloading process.

Mr. Leweniqila emphasised the importance of accuracy because of the time spent on the loading/offloading of a ship will determine the cost of work that will be charged to the shipping agency that uses Port facilities.

Whistleblower Policy a company safeguard

IN order to safeguard the company, its employees, and the shareholder from any possible abuse of office or code of conduct, Fiji Ports has included a "Whistleblower" policy as a part of its overall management strategy.

"It is important for

employees to have an avenue to follow if they have reasonable grounds to believe that serious wrongdoing is taking place in the workplace," explained Mrs Jiu Daunivalu, General Manager Corporate Services.

An employee may 'blow the whistle' on illegal

activities or unethical behaviour. "Employees using the policy are expected to act in accordance with the company's values and Code of Conduct.

"We are conscious of the dangers of creating an internal culture of distrust and suspicion. As this would

damage morale, false accusations will result in disciplinary action.

"Most importantly, anyone making use of the whistleblower policy and procedure will be protected from any form of unfair treatment such as victimisation," concluded Mrs Daunivalu.