**High Commission of India**

**Suva**

**Release of Commemorative Stamps on Girmit Day 2022**

**Press Release**

As part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM), celebrating 75 years of India’s Independence, the High Commission of India in Suva (Fiji), in association with Post Fiji Limited, brought out a set of commemorative postage stamps and first day cover to mark the 143rd Girmit Day in Fiji.

2.​ During the colonial period, the first Girmits or indentured labourers from India were brought to Fiji onboard the Ship “Leonidas” on 14 May 1879. For another 37 years, till the system was abolished, more than 60,000 indentured labourers were brought from India to work in the Sugarcane plantations.

3. Today, the Honorable Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, Rear Admiral (Ret’d) Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama jointly released the commemorative stamps and the first day cover with the High Commissioner of India to Fiji, His Excellency P.S. Karthigeyan, at a grand function held at the Suva Civic Centre to mark the 143rd Girmit Day in Fiji.

4. Also present were Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Hon. Premila Kumar, Minister for Infrastructure and Meteorological Services, Lands and Mineral Resources, Hon. Jone Usamate, Assistant Ministers, Senior Government Officers, members of the Diplomatic Corps, Business Leaders, prominent members of the Indian Diaspora and a large number of the general public.

5. In his remarks on the occasion, the Fijian Prime Minister recounted the enormous hardship faced by the indentured labourers who continued to struggle against racial discrimination even after the end of colonial period in Fiji and underlined the need to make sure that the country does not revert back to such a state again. In this regard, he emphasized on the importance of better understanding of the history, heritage and contribution of the Girmitiyas and their descendants to Fiji among the wider sections of the society.

6. An exhibition of the commemorative stamps was also displayed at the event along with the archive material on Girmit History and India tourism.

7. Pictures of the newly released commemorative stamps and first day cover along with event photos are attached herewith.

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14 May 2022