

# Fiji's History in Capsule

**1874** - Fiji ceded to Great Britain and as part of its colonial administration policy brought in thousands of indentured labourers from India to work on cotton and sugar plantations.

**1920** - The indentured system came to an end in 1920, after prolonged protests by Mahatma Gandhi and Reverend C.F. Andrews. By that time there were 35,000 free Indians in Fiji, who started work in transport, sales and trade. They sent their children to school and some went abroad to acquire more skills. The population increased as other Indians joined them. The native Fijians, however, had no flair for business. They were satisfied with subsistence agriculture.

From trade, the Indians moved into the fields of law and medicine. Soon, every shop in Suva, the capital, was owned by Indians. They, however, could not own any land. Under a government decree, all the land belonged to the ethnic Fijians and the Indians could only lease it.

**1970** - Fiji gained independence from Great Britain.

**1972** - The first election was held. The Alliance Party made up predominantly of Fijian chiefs, a few Fiji Indian businessmen and part-European descendants of white settlers won.

**1977** - The second elections were won by the National Federation Party made up predominantly of Fiji Indians, which however could not agree on a government. Invoking emergency powers, the governor-general asked the Alliance Party to form a government, which it did very swiftly.

**1982** - The Alliance Party dominated the third elections.

**11 April 1987** - The fourth election was held. The Fiji Labour Party/National Federation Party coalition won. The coalition was seen as predominantly Indian even though the Coalition leader Dr. Timoci Bavadra, who was later sworn in as Prime Minister is an indigenous Fijian.

In the same month, Tavua villagers in the western side of Fiji set up roadblocks in protest of the new government. About 3,000 ethnic Fijians met at Viseisei village (Dr. Bavadra's home village where he is also the chief), Lautoka and signed a petition calling for Fijian political supremacy. 5,000 Fijian protesters marched through Suva, calling for the removal of the Bavadra government.

**14 May 1987** - Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, third in command in the Royal Fiji Military Forces, executed the first bloodless military coup. He suspended the Constitution, appointed himself Commander-in-Chief and named a 15-member interim administration to run the country.

**23 September 1987** - The Coalition and Alliance Party formed a caretaker government following the Deuba Accord, initiated by Ratu Ganilau.

**25 September 1987** - Rabuka staged his second coup as he believed the Deuba Accord will not deliver on the aspirations of Fijians.

**October 1987** - Rabuka issued two decrees formally abrogating the 1970 Constitution. He sacked Ganilau and formally declared Fiji a Republic.

**5 December 1987** - Rabuka dismissed his Taukeist government and announced a 21-member Alliance

cabinet. Ganilau is appointed President and Mara, Prime Minister.

**July 1990** - Ganilau promulgated the new Constitution, giving ethnic Fijians political supremacy. This constitution replaced the 1970 constitution. This is a racist constitution that allowed for the supremacy of Fijian chiefs (men in general). Because of this, Fiji Indians, other minority groups and women were treated as second class citizens.

**July 1991** - Rabuka resigned from the military to join the interim government as Deputy Prime Minister.

**June 1992** - Rabuka became Prime Minister after the chiefs-sponsored Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT) (Fijian Political Party) captured the most seats.

**November 1992** - The government budget was disapproved after eight SVT members, led by Josefata Kamikamica, voted against it. New elections were called.

**January 1994** - Mara succeeded the late Ganilau as president.

**February 1994** - The SVT returned to power in the general elections with 31 seats. The dissident group led by Kamikamica formed the Fijian Association Party and won three seats. The National Federation Party captured 20 seats.

**1995** - The Constitutional Review Commission was set up with Sir Paul Reeves a former Archbishop and Governor-General of New Zealand with a Maori background as Chair. Soon after its establishment, it held wide ranging consultation with all sections of the community and submit-