

Hotel owner rejects 'ghost town' image

By KEJERA SERELINI

The construction of a new hotel in the heart of Labasa town is almost completion.

The hotel is to bring a new air of change in the town.

The 19-room hotel which is yet to be named will cater for corporate and government officials that visits the town at \$60 a night.

Hotel owner Vinesh Dayal yesterday said the hotel is in its finishing stages and has a unique set up which locals can also enjoy.

The two-storey hotel will have airconditioned rooms upstairs, a cake shop, conference room, coffee shop and a bar.

"It is a hotel where people will get everything they want under one roof," he said.

"It has a unique set up and is nothing like any hotels here in the North."

The new hotel will also give a variety of choices for corporate and government on places to hold their conference and also where to stay when visiting family members in the North.

"Not only will it be affordable but efficient since it is located right in the town," said Mr. Dayal.

"It is spacious and they will love the setting and what it will offer once it is open."

The hotel currently



The construction site of a new hotel at the heart of Labasa town. Photo: KHAILASH RAO

employs 35 people and is expected to provide permanent employee to more than 21 people who have experiences in the hotel industry.

Mr. Dayal said the construction of the hotel would also encourage peo-

ple to think about Labasa differently.

"People say that Labasa is a ghost town but that is not true, I simply don't agree with the statement. It depends on the industry that you are in."

"For the hotel industry,

Labasa has the potential and I'm confident that this project will boost the economic activity in the town."

Labasa Mayor Pradeep Singh said the move would definitely boost economic activity in

the town.

"This is really great for the town," Dr. Singh said.

"The town needs people like Mr. Dayal to bring up its standard, I'm very grateful that he has so much confidence in the town."

Vodafone disputes medical findings

Local mobile users not need to worry about the deadly effects of mobile phones, says leading mobile company Vodafone (Fiji) Limited.

The company was responding to a research made by Australian neurosurgeon Dr. Vini Khurana who highlighted that there was a link between mobile phones and malignant tumor.

His research also indicated that the health danger involved from heavy mobile usage was far greater than smoking.

However, company chief executive officer Aslam Khan strongly disputed Dr. Khurana's findings saying that the findings were contrary of those of the World Health Organisation.

"We do not anticipate such articles to affect mobile business because Dr. Khurana's advice conflicts with what the World Health Organisation," Mr. Khan said.

The WHO indicated that there was no present scientific evidence to indicate the need for any special precautions for the use of mobile phone.

"If individuals are concerned, they might choose to limit their own or their children's RF expo-

sure by limiting the length of calls or by using hands-free devices to keep mobile phones away from the head and body," the WHO website highlighted.

He also said Mr. Khurana's research had not undergone proper review before publication to the media.

"In addition, Dr. Khurana has not followed the scientific process for publishing his review and his paper has not undergone peer-review but has been published directly on his own website and Dr. Khurana presents no new research findings and offers an evaluation of parts of the scientific literature based on his personal interpretation," Mr. Khan said.

"This is important because good scientific process requires research to be published in a peer reviewed journal and must present a balanced analysis of the published RF science considering the relative scientific quality of different studies."

Mr. Khan stressed that the company prioritises the health and safety of its customers and that all expertise advice have been sort to ensure this.

"This means that we make sure

that all aspects of the mobile technology we use to deliver our services meet both international and national safety guidelines," he said.

"Our advice on health and mobile technology comes from the conclusions reached by panels of expert scientific review groups conducted within the framework of or appointed by national or international health authorities such as the WHO."

This advice is drawn from reviews and evaluation of published research into radio frequency fields that is, radio waves.

Through active monitoring from health authorities, the company findings are:

- More than 30 authoritative expert scientific reviews undertaken around the world, during the past seven years have not found adverse health effects for adults or children caused by mobile telephony operating within the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) radio frequency public exposure guidelines.

As far as shields are concerned the WHO stated in a fact

sheet published in 2000: "Scientific evidence does not indicate any need for RF-absorbing covers or other 'absorbing devices' on mobile phones. They cannot be justified on health grounds and the effectiveness of many such devices in reducing RF exposure is unproven."

On actions the public may wish to take to reduce their exposure to radio waves the WHO goes on to state: "present scientific information does not indicate the need for any special precautions for use of mobile phones. If individuals are concerned, they might choose to limit their own or their children's RF exposure by limiting the length of calls, or using 'hands-free' devices to keep mobile phones away from the head and body."

A 13-country study on head and neck tumours, the INTERPHONE project, coordinated by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is already underway. As these diseases are rare, large numbers of subjects are needed for accuracy. We need to wait until IARC publishes these results which are anticipated later this year.

Keshwan promises to deliver

There is room for more proactive roles by the Finance Companies Association in the financial service industry, collectively as Licensed Credit says newly appointed chairman Freddie Keshwan.

He was appointed at yesterday's annual general meeting yesterday. Mr. Keshwan said as the new chairman of the association, he hopes to explore this aspect to enhance the association role in the financial sector.

"This I will be exploring and discussing in our next meeting," he said. "For now, the association is mainly focused on developments in regulatory/compliance and economic trends (both domestic and global) which are the two major issues facing the association members that could potentially affect its operations in one way or the other."

When questioned about his appointment, Mr. Keshwan said he was pleased and honoured to be bestowed for the position of trust and confidence from the association members and Merchant Finance and Credit Corp.

Mr. Keshwan said that he looks forward to working with the association members on a number of issues currently on the agenda in the best interest of all stakeholders.

"Our ultimate objective is to contribute towards a sound platform for the development of Fiji's financial system and at the same time provide our customers with a diversified range and best possible financial solutions."

He is currently the chief executive officer of Home Finance Company Limited and has an extensive background and experience in the banking and finance industry of more than 23 years.

He replaced Merchant Finance and Investment Company Limited chief executive officer Pramesh Sharma whose term has expired.

FCA is made up of credit institutions licensed by the Reserve Bank of Fiji and its current membership included HFC Finance, Credit Corporation and Merchant Finance. The association was formed in 2004 to provide valuable contribution to RBF and the industry generally on matters affecting the Licensed Credit Institutions from a united platform.

State to secure funds for terminal

Funds to build the Rokobili Terminal are most likely to be secured from the Public Private Partnership.

Interim Attorney-General Aiyaz Sayed-Khatiyum yesterday said the interim government and the Fiji Ports Corporation Limited were making use of the Public Private Partnership as a possible source of funds for the project.

Public Private Partnership was

implemented this year, with funding from the Australian Aid and Asian Development Bank.

"It is obvious that the Rokobili Terminal is a good project and the upgrading of the wharf facilities is required for the purpose of providing for better ports facilities for both tourism and cargo shipment purposes.

"Such a project, in all likelihood, would establish Suva and take advantage of our geographical position in

the South Pacific," he said.

Mr. Sayed-Khatiyum said there would be a need for a healthier return from the investment for such a capital expenditure.

"It is such circumstances that Public Private Partnership would be more suitable. It is on this basis that government and the Fiji Ports Corporation Limited are exploring such possible sources," Mr. Sayed-Khatiyum said.



FIJIAN HOLDINGS UNIT TRUST

Unit Price as at 31st March, 2008

Entry Price \$0.68

Exit Price \$0.63

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