A Balancing Act

Balancing the responsibility of $2billion target and ensuring best customer service can be a challenge for the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority.

At least Chief Executive Officer, Mr Jitoko Tikolevu agrees.

“This is the first time that the Authority’s target will surpass the $2bn target. While our officers will be focusing on this target, it is important that we do not compromise the quality of our services.

“It is important that we continue to listen to our customers, that we continue to engage with them and ensure that we continue to provide quality service.”

Recently, while the Authority’s Taxation Division was strategizing for the next half of the year, two renowned speakers and members of the business community were invited to address officers.

While they may be poles apart in the businesses they run, FMF Foods Chief Executive Officer, Ram Bajekal and Marco Polo and Garden City creator, Wah Sing had similar messages for FRCA and its human resources.

Mr Bajekal, a man who spearheaded the $18m turnaround of FMF Foods between 2009 and 2010 was invited to speak on FRCA’s relationship with its stakeholders while Mr Sing, a self-made millionaire spoke on Nurturing Small and Micro Enterprises.
But first, he said, we must all understand that we pay tax for the facilities we enjoy as a citizen/business.

However, the Authority must first make tax laws and codes simple to allow companies and business engage in productive things rather than how to get through the legislations. He also stressed the need for the Authority to resolve issues timely.

Mr Sing on the other hand emphasised the need to nurture family based businesses in the country.

“These are businesses run by people who will stay in the country, they will not go anywhere,” Mr Sing said.

In such family businesses, he added, the founders are often the last to have extensive knowledge and more importantly interest in the business as the newer generation or their children often opt for greener pastures.

For example, in farming, the younger generation would rather look after their parents then have them breaking their backs in the farms. And while this had its advantages, the knowledge and expertise in farming is lost.

Mr Sing also stressed the need for the Authority to scrutinise its concessions and their relativity to the nation.

For example, he said, businesses listed in the South Pacific Stock Exchange as per the concessions were only required to pay 10 per cent tax, while SMEs which were still struggling were still required to pay 20 per cent tax.

“We appreciate such comments. While FRCA has a task of collecting revenue for the Government, it is important that we are true facilitators as well as being administrators and enforcers,” Mr Tikolevu said.

“And that is the balancing act that the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority has to do.”
Jitoko Tikolevu
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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