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THE FIRST STUDENT NEWSPAPER IN THE WORLD TODAY

Crisis fallout may hit USP staff

By REGGIE DUTT

THE UNIVERSITY of the South Pacific may face a major staffing shortage in the fallout from Fiji's political crisis.

Personnel manager Kristin Adair told *Wansolwara* last week that "a lot of the senior staff" at Laucala campus had indicated they wanted to leave.

The Vice-Chancellor, Esekia Solofa, also said he expected some resignations — as happened after the 1987 coups.

"I don't know how many, and I hope not too many, but I expect that there will be some," Mr Solofa said.

Ms Adair said she could not put a number on the people who had resigned or who would resign.

"It is a little unclear at the moment — the verbal number is different to what we actually have in writing," said Ms Adair.

"A lot of people have indicated they will, but whether they follow through is another question."

Asked who were indicating a desire to leave, Ms Adair said: "In all cases, they are senior people".

"Everytime something happens, it changes people's minds," she said.

It was also affecting decisions by people who had planned to stay on for a further contract.

New people being recruited have also been affected.

Ms Adair said she had received messages saying, "what is happening?" and "we don't want to come

anymore".

She said it was a hard waiting game.

"In fact, what most people from overseas are concerned about is not safety, but devaluation, and the effect it might have on university salaries."

She said they had to look at their financial abilities before they could come here and USP had no way of reassuring them.

The university hoped the situation would soon stabilise.

Academics warn of Fiji 'disaster'

By SALESH KUMAR and ALISON OFOTALAU

SOME academics and non-government organisations say Fiji is heading towards "disaster" if the government remains Fijian-dominated following the abrogation of the 1997 constitution.

This followed martial law last week in the wake of the hostage crisis when coup leader George Speight and gunmen seized Parliament and kidnapped then Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry's government.

Professor Stewart Firth, head of history/politics at the University of the South Pacific, told *Wansolwara* that Fiji could "expect something bad" if Indo-Fijians were not given their rights as citizens.

"Speight and his group have to admit that the Indians have contributed a lot in building this nation and the current tragedy puts them in a second class situation," said Prof Firth.

USP economist Dr Biman Prasad said: "We cannot run any government without the support of all the ethnic communities. The government must be inclusive of every community."

"The 1997 constitution which was overwhelmingly supported by all the political parties was based on a power-sharing mechanism and it represented all the ethnic communities," said Dr Prasad.

He added that last week's decree to allow amendments to the 1997 constitution effectively means the abrogation of the constitution.

However, USP sociologist Sitiveni Ratuva said that while the 1997 constitution addressed issues of national integration, it failed to fully address "Fijian nationalistic interests".

"This includes ethnic symbolism and governance. There was fear among the nationalists about the Indian dominance in government which would deprive them of their interests," said Mr Ratuva.

Director of the Fiji Council of Social Services, Hassan Khan, blamed the crisis on a lack of educational awareness of the 1997 constitution.

Teresia Teaiwa, lecturer in Pacific studies at Victoria University, Wellington, said: "Until indigenous Fijians take education and the care of their children seriously, there will never be enough leaders of good calibre to choose from."

While Australia, New Zealand, India and the United States strongly condemned the insurrection, Pacific countries responded slowly.

The 16-member South Pacific Forum backed constitutional government eight days after the seizure of Parliament.

Both Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia condemned the kidnapping. New Caledonia's Vice-President Leopold Joredie said the crisis would affect the whole region.

"New Caledonia will not support a coup. To us, it is obvious that any government must come out of the will of the people — only Mahendra Chaudhry exists in our view," said Mr Joredie.

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A gunman warns journalists to duck for cover during the Fiji insurrection. □ More pictures on pages 6 and 11. Photo: JOE YAYA

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