

## **PRESS RELEASE**

*August 27, 2019*

### **Best Wishes Reception for 'Ikale Tahī hosted by H.E Tetsuya Ishii**

On Friday, 23 August 2019 H.E. Mr. Tetsuya Ishii, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Kingdom of Tonga hosted Tonga's National Rugby Union Team the 'Ikale Tahī for a Best Wish Reception prior to the Rugby World Cup in Japan which starts on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, at his official residence in Nuku'alofa.

Hon. Saia Piukala, Minister for Health and Internal Affairs attended the reception along with Mr. Edgar Cocker, Chief Secretary of the PMO & Secretary to Cabinet, Mr. Lopeti Senituli, PM's Political Adviser, Mr. Fe'ao Vunipola, CEO and Vice President of Tonga Rugby Union, Mr. Pifeleti Faka'osi, Manager of the 'Ikale Tahī, Mr. Siale Piutau, the captain of the 'Ikale Tahī with other coaches and the players.

Ambassador Ishii in his remarks congratulated the team in their preparation and training ahead of the Rugby World Cup in Japan next month. "We have less than 1 month before the commencement of the World Cup, and I wish you all great success in Japan," he said. He shared his impression with the popularity of rugby in Tonga and the powerful and deep connection built by the players, with the people of Tonga all over the world.

"In Japan, rugby is getting more and more popular. And now, it is playing a pivotal role in our two countries' exchanges. There are Tongan players in Japan's team, and the bold 'Ikale Tahī team has famed players in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Europe. This fact proves that rugby possesses both a local and international popularity."

"I do wish that through your impressive and passionate matches, more and more Japanese people will know the name of Tonga," stated the Ambassador.

A best wish toast was proposed by Hon. Saia Piukala. He said "I am glad that Tonga and Japan are in the different groups so that I can also support the Japanese team which includes many Tongan players. I will not be able to visit Japan, however, I will cheer both teams from Tonga."

Then, 'Ikale Tahī Captain, Siale Piutau thanked the Ambassador for the Best Wish Reception and the warm hospitality extended to all of them. Before the evening concluded the players received best wishes also for their game against Australia's Western Force, at the Teufaiva Stadium the next day.

The Rugby World Cup 2019 will be held in 12 cities throughout Japan from the 20<sup>th</sup> of September to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November. 'Ikale Tahī will have their matches in Sapporo, Osaka and Kumamoto cities.

End.

Attached: Reception Photos

Photos:



Best Wish Reception for 'Ikale Tahi at the Ambassador of Japan's Residence.



H.E. Mr. Tetsuya Ishii's remarks at a Best Wish Reception hosted for 'Ikale Tahi at his residence on Friday 23 August 2019.



Management and Players of 'Ikale Tahi with H.E. Mr. Tetsuya Ishii, Hon. Saia Piukala and Mr. Fotu Fisiiahi.



Best wishes toast proposed for the 'Ikale Tahi team prior to arriving Japan for the Rugby World Cup in September.





'Ikale Tahi's assistant coach Mr. Pita 'Alaniti and Captain, Siale Piutau with Ambassador Ishii and Mrs. Ishii, Hon. Saia Piukala and his wife Dr. Piukala



'Ikale Tahi players and Management team at their Best Wish Reception on Friday, 23 August 2019