

FIJI TOURISM HIT WITH CLIMATE, PANDEMIC DOUBLE WHAMMY

Fiji dive operator Ashwin Pal was living his dream until the global pandemic hit, guiding tourists around an underwater wonderland of dazzling Pacific coral reefs. Now the 35-year-old hunts the neon-hued fish he once proudly showed off to international visitors, forced to kill the creatures he loves to feed his wife and four children. And the coronavirus-induced shutdown of Fiji's tourism industry is not the only crisis facing Pal's Coral Coast paradise, with climate change posing a longer-term threat to the region's marine environment. "Lots of coral's been bleached, lots of corals are dying-soft coral, hard coral-to be honest," Pal told AFP.



Sun light is falling through water on coral on Fiji's Coral Coast.

Fiji is also regularly pounded by category five super-storms, with Cyclone Yasa the latest to menace the island nation of 900,000 this week. Such top-of-the-scale monsters were once rare, but many scientists and Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama blame their increased frequency-and the accompanying damage to coral and tourism infrastructure-on climate change. It has created an uncertain future for Pal and many thousands like him across the Pacific, who rely on tourism and a climate-vulnerable environment for their livelihoods.

