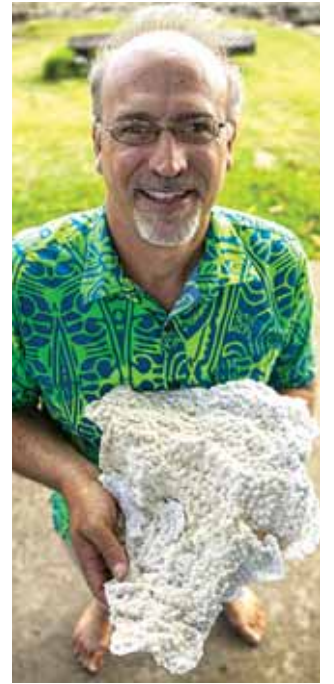




An aerial view of the Fiji's Coral Coast.



Marine biologist Victor Bonito displaying coral on Fiji's Coral Coast.

### Reefs 'first to go'

On a palm-fringed beach a few kilometers from Pal's dive shop, marine biologist Victor Bonito outlines his decades-long struggle to preserve Fiji's coral reefs. The frustration evident in his voice as he explains the scale of the challenge and the need for urgent action. "In 2014, 2015 and 2016 we experienced coral bleaching on reefs all around Fiji, mainly shallow, near-shore reefs," he said. "Here on the Coral Coast we lost 30-60 percent of the reef area in a matter of weeks-there are the

reefs where tourists would be snorkelling, just off the beach." Bonito's Reef Explorer Fiji has been farming strains of heat-tolerant coral to replenish the reefs, but he says it will not be enough without meaningful action to address climate change.

"Stop with the talking and planning," he said. "If we don't have a global commitment and we don't take serious action on a global scale, our coral reefs-not just in Fiji but around the world-are going to be one of the first ecosystems to go." Bainimarama warned this

month that the Pacific's environment was a bellwether for the health of the planet as a whole and a way of life would be lost without concerted action to save it. "We Pacific nations owe it to our people, and to humanity as a whole, to raise our voices more to demand that major emitters step up their climate actions and commitments," he said. "Without this, we will lose our homes, our way of life our wellbeing and livelihoods-it's past time to get serious. — AFP



People are swimming on Fiji's Coral Coast.