



Former Fiji PM lets go of hatred to avail superior medical facilities

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Sitiveni Rabuka

Vadodara : He was the man who led a coup against a government supported by Indo-Fijian community in Fiji in 1987. Two decades later, former Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka does not tire of praising Indians. Rabuka,

who is in Vadodara, chose India over Australia and China to have his knee-replacement surgery.

Being an ethnic Fijian, he wanted the native Fijians to have more power than the Indians. Though the coup was bloodless, it sent shivers down the spine of thousands of Indo-Fijians who moved out of the island.

"In 1987, I was trying to play the role of Mahatma Gandhi in my country. The only difference between us was that Gandhi chose a totally peaceful path. I wanted the native Fijians to have more power and representation than outsiders," said Rabuka who heads to Opposition party in Fiji. "However, now we want both Indians and Fijians to co-exist peacefully. The present government should have an all embracing approach."

Also, he did not fail to laud the enterprising skills of the Gujaratis, "It is amazing how Gujaratis have progressed in our country. Our political party is funded by a number of

Indians, most of whom are Gujaratis," Rabuka said. Rabuka will be operated upon by Dr Bharat Mody at the Centre for Knee Surgery next week. When asked why he chose India for surgery, Rabuka said, "Despite, quality manpower and infrastructure, India is much cheaper than other countries, when it comes to medical expenses. The surgery would have cost more even in Fiji. However; rather than expenditure, I was more concerned about the quality of service, which is excellent in India.

"Some of my close friends, who were operated upon by Dr Mody recommended me his name following which I contacted him," informed Rabuka He last visited India in 1979 during a joint military training with the Indian army in Chennai. Though he does not have any plans of moving around in India, Rabuka has plans of treating himself to Indian cuisine. "I am a diehard fan of Indian food, especially Tandoori dishes. Also I am looking forward to feast on the Indian curry." he said.

"This is a classic example of medical tourism. We do not need swanky buildings for attracting patients from the world over. All that is required is quality service and faith. I hope this surgery becomes a milestone for the medical tourism industry in the state," said Mody, who has operated over 30 Fijians and number of NRIs till date.