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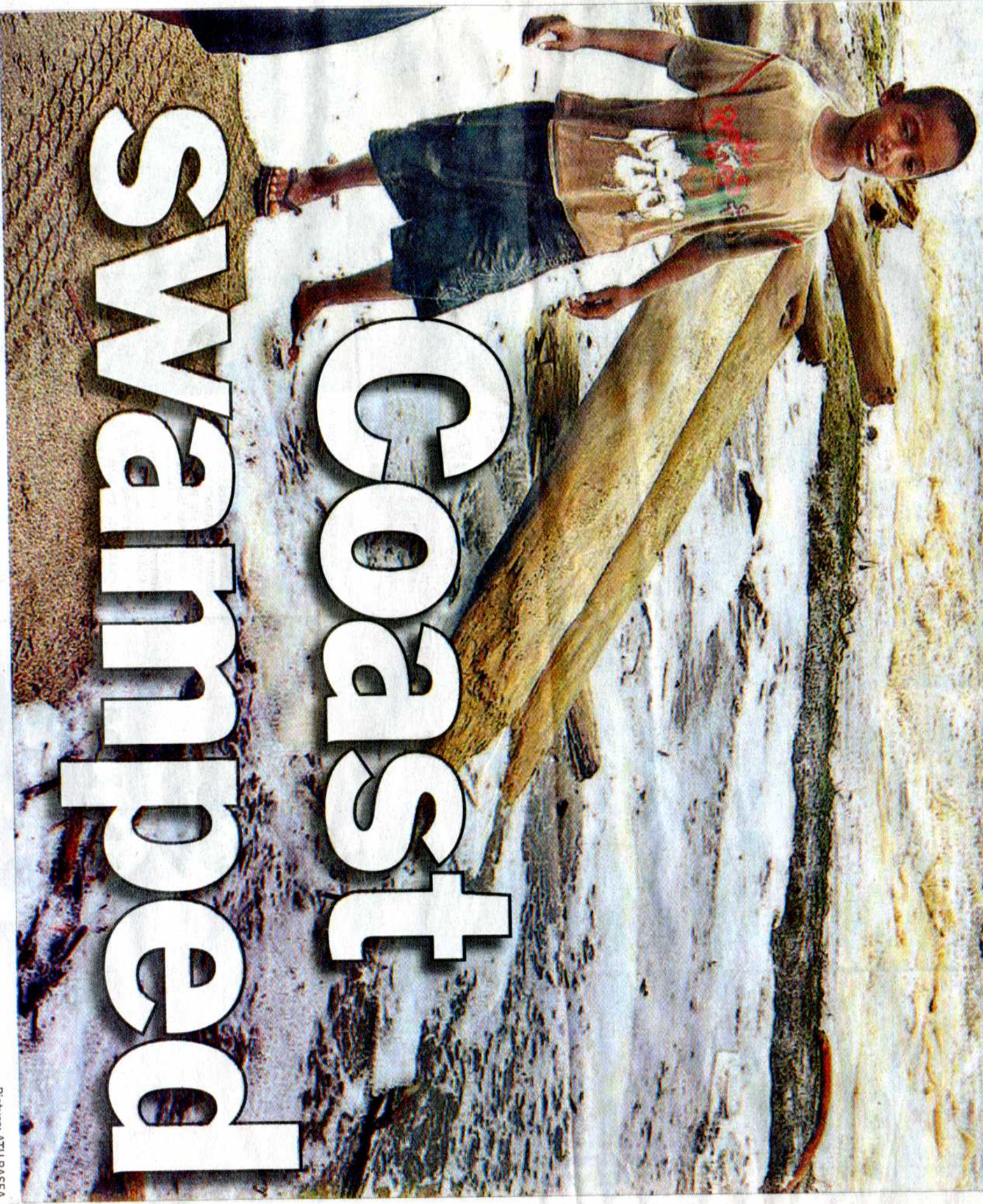
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Picture: ATU RASEA

Sandy highway ... the waves reach the Queen's Highway as Ratu Ne makes his way to Vatukarasa Village yesterday.

TIDAL SURGE

Giant waves flood hotel rooms

By FELIX CHAUDHARY

ONE school was closed and a village dwelling was damaged as tidal surges entered hotel rooms along the Coral Coast yesterday. Nadiri Bay Khalsa School was closed yesterday after tidal swells uprooted trees and washed away fences while residents living in a house perched by the sea in Votualatala Village scrambled to safety after it was flooded with seawater, causing some damage to the dwelling.

"Early this morning from 6am to 8am, a series of waves washed through the school compound. A few coconut trees on the beach were uprooted and food crops in our school gardens were completely destroyed.

"As a result we instructed children that were arriving to school to return to their homes as a safety precaution," said Nadiri Bay Khalsa School headteacher Bir Chand.

At nearby Yadua Village, the tidal surge destroyed temporary

shelters used as cooking houses as water raced 10m into the village.

Korolevu police reported that apart from the house flooding in Votualatala Village, there were no other significant events that occurred as a result of the tidal swells.

People living along the Coral Coast should expect more big swells over the next few days.

According to Coral Coast weatherman, Robert Kennedy, the tidal surges are brought about by a high pressure system in the South.

"In Fijian the word for what is happening is *va loka*. This is a common occurrence during this time of the year," he said.

Mr Kennedy, owner and operator of Sandy Point Beach Cottages, said in the past the tidal surges broke seawalls and washed debris over the road.

"We have had bigger swells in the past," Mr Kennedy said.

The duty weatherman at the Meteorology Department in Nataka confirmed the swells were generated by a high pressure sys-

tem to the South, intensified by high tides.

"We have issued a warning to people living along the coastal areas in Southern Viti Levu, Kadavu passage and Southern Lau Group."

At press time last night before high tide at 9pm, coastal villagers stood ready to move to higher ground if the waves intensified in size.

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