A COMPANY involved in the medical business says the government policy in Fiji is very much supportive for the development of medical tourism in the country.

However, Sahyadri Specialty Pacific Hospitals Ltd Fiji says that what is required is good team-work at various levels and appropriate marketing at the international level.

"Fiji is globally known as a tourist destination but we are making efforts to make it a medical tourism destination too as it will supplement revenue from tourism," said SSPHL Fiji official Dr Netra Vishwakarma.

Dr Vishwakarma said there was also the need for the availability of hotels, airline connections and medical facilities. She also said it was not only a matter of investment or the availability of patients but more significantly skilled super-specialty doctors, nurses and paramedical staff.

"We are visiting nearby Pacific Island countries to create medical awareness and are informing them about the facilities available in government hospitals in Fiji.

"There is a great demand and need in the region for cardiology, oncology, advanced orthopedic, nephrology and radiology. Many countries are facing an acute shortage of specialists in these areas."

Dr Vishwakarma said in association with Deoyani Multi Specialty Hospitals in Pune, India, SSPHL was organising doctors from India to conduct free screening of patients in Fiji and other Pacific Island countries.

"Unless diagnosis is done, suitable medical treatment can't be advised and for the development of medical tourism in the available set of circumstances, this is a top primary need.

"In view of this, we have taken appropriate steps for the establishment of certain basic facilities in some of the Pacific countries.

"This will help us make Fiji as the hub for medical tourism in the Pacific and other countries as the spoke. We have been receiving enquiries from patients in developed countries like Australia and New Zealand about the availability of medical facilities in Fiji.

"This is mainly because the cost is most competitive in comparison with many other countries in the world including India, follow up facilities are available and a doctor is always available online in the event of an emergency."

Dr Vishwakarma said some insurance companies from Australia and New Zealand had also expressed interest in the facilities available in Fiji in terms of super-specialty medical treatment.

She said SSPHL planned to establish kidney related facilities and cardiology diagnostic facilities in more than two countries, basically keeping a cardiologist, Intensive Care Unit nurses in the countries on a full-time basis.
"We believe that Fiji will become a reliable medical tourism destination in the near future and SSPHL is working towards making this possible," she said.

SSPHL director Professor Manu Munibhargav said medical facilities in Fiji had notably improved in the past five years, saying "every day improvement is a vision of SSPHL for the benefit of Fijian patients".

"We are working and contributing in the best interest of patients," he said.

People who need information on the heart surgeries being organised by SSPHL can contact them via email at pacifichealth2000@gmail.com