

**Rear Admiral J. V. Bainimarama, CF(Mil), OSt.J, MSD, jssc, psc**

**Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, the Public Service, People’s Charter and Change and Progress, Information, iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Lands and Mineral Resources**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**OPENING OF THE NALOTAWA NURSING STATION**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Nanuku, Yakete Wed. 9th April, 2014**

**BA 1100 Hours**

**The Turaga na Tui Yakete,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Boys and Girls.**

Bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

I’m delighted to be here to share this memorable day with the People of Yakete as we celebrate the opening of your new Nursing Station.

Providing adequate health care for ordinary Fijians is one of my Government’s top priorities. In fact, we have an obligation to do so under our Constitution. So I’m very pleased that the level of service that other Fijians have come to expect in other parts of the country has finally come to Yakete.

No longer do the people of Nalotawa have to travel the 30 kilometres to the Balevuto health centre to get medical assistance. Having your own facility here will be a great benefit to all of you but especially for our mothers and children.

I urge you all to make good use of the Nursing Station and also do everything you can to support the staff. They are here to look after you but I’d like to also encourage you all to do more to look after yourselves. Because good health is not only about getting access to a cure if you fall ill or have an accident. It’s also about preventing illness in the first place.

We all need to do a lot more to look after our health by eating well and exercising. Prevention is better than cure.

And pursing a healthy lifestyle is vital if we are to make any progress in combatting the non-communicable diseases that are destroying the health of our people and killing far too many Fijians – such things as high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.

Of course, you can do everything you can to look after yourself and still get sick. But at least help is now close at hand and I know this facility is going to be a huge benefit for the people of this area.

We estimate that the Nalotawa Nursing Station will serve the needs of between 500 and 700 people living in the following villages :

* Yaloku
* Nanuku
* Nalotawa
* Tukuraki
* Rara
* Navilawa
* Tabataba
* The nearby Settlement of Cirisobu; and the
* Nalotawa District School.

I’m pleased and proud that you all now have your own nursing station and I especially want to thank the *Mataqali Yalamarawa* for providing this piece of land to build it on.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as many of you already know, I am currently touring the country gathering the 5000 signatures I need to officially register my proposed political movement – *FijiFirst*. It has been a wonderful experience to meet so many people face to face and I want to thank everyone for their support.

I cannot start campaigning for the forthcoming election until my proposed movement is officially registered. But I just want to say a few words as Prime Minister about some of the lies that are being told by some people at the present time about the protection of i’Taukei land.

If anyone tells you that your land is threatened in any way, do not believe them. They are trying to stir up trouble for their own political ends. They are trying to instil fear in you. They are lying.

As I keep saying, there is no threat whatsoever to i’Taukei ownership of our land. In fact under my Government, we have strengthened the protection of i’Taukei land. Let me explain how.

In the past, some unscrupulous politicians used a loophole in the law to sell off portions of i’Taukei land. They got around the ban on native title being converted to freehold with a fancy legal sidestep. What they did was to first convert native title into Crown land, which the law allowed. Then they converted that same piece of land from Crown to freehold, which the law also allowed. The result was that some very valuable native title – i’Taukei land - was sold off and lost forever.

My Government put a stop to that. It will never happen again. So the truth is that more land is now protected than ever before because we ended this practice. But don’t take my word for it. Read it for yourself in our Constitution – the first Constitution in Fiji’s history ever to be translated into i’Taukei. It’s all there in black and white in the Bill of Rights – an absolute guarantee of the protection of i’Taukei land. For you, your children and the generations to come.

This is what it says: “*The ownership of all i’Taukei land shall remain with the customary owners of that land and i’Taukei land shall not be permanently alienated, whether by sale, grant, transfer or exchange, except to the State in accordance with section 27.”*

Section 27 says that the State can compulsorily acquire property when necessary for a public purpose such as building a road or an airport. This has been the case with every Government since colonial times and certainly with every constitution since Independence But our new Constitution stipulates that this compulsory acquisition can only take place after the owner is paid just and equitable compensation.

And crucially, the Constitution says this in Section 28: *“Any i’Taukei land acquired by the State for public purpose…shall revert to the customary owners if the land is no longer required by the State”*. In other words, you don’t lose it forever, only until the State doesn’t need it anymore.

And there are other benefits to landowners that have never existed before, such as the right to a fair share of royalties for any minerals found under their land or under the seabed in waters where they have customary fishing rights. Also, for the time in any of our Constitutions, the Bill of Rights says that any land leased by landowners must provide them with a fair and equitable return.

So there it is – the truth as outlined in our Constitution. It is the Supreme Law of our country and the law from which all other laws flow. And it gives landowners a fairer deal than they have ever received before.

I repeat. There is no threat to i’Taukei land and anyone who tells you otherwise is a liar. And I ask you not to vote for liars when it comes to the election, for your sake and the sake of our beloved nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to conclude, I would like to thank everyone involved in the task of getting this project off the ground - the local Mataqali, the Commissioner Western’s Office, the Ministry of Health and other Government departments.

As I keep stressing, we are here to serve the Fijian people and today marks an important new phase in serving the needs of the people of Yakete.

I now have great pleasure in declaring the Nalotawa Nursing Station open.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_