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**Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development**

**and Statistics, Public Service, Peoples Charter for Change and Progress, Information, iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Lands and Mineral Resources**

**SPEECH AT THE HANDING-OVER OF SPORTS EQUIPMENTS TO THE TAVUA RUGBY CLUB**

Tavualevu Village Fri. 9th May, 2014

TAVUA 1200Hours

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I’m delighted to be back in Tavua and to see you all again as I hand over some badly-needed gym equipment for the use of your local sports people.

There have been some great people from here who’ve contributed to the life of our nation over the years and none more so than the late Tui Tavua, Ratu Jale Kuwe. He was a wonderful role model to his people and the rest of Fiji – an enlightened chief who firmly believed in the principle of service. He is sadly missed but leaves behind a tremendous legacy, including what we are here to celebrate today.

One of Ratu Jale’s great interests was sport and especially rugby union. He saw it as not only a wonderful spectator sport but as a valuable means of character building and creating a sense of team work amongst our young people. He had a passion for developing sports in Tavua and a passion to ensure that you obtained the proper equipment.

It was Ratu Jale who asked the officials of the Tavua Rugby Club: “Why is the Tavua team not performing as well as it should in Provincial competition?” They said: “the Tavua players have got a problem with upper body strength. We need a gym so that they can work on these areas of the body and improve their overall fitness”. And that’s where I come into the picture.

Ratu Jale approached me asking if I could help him secure some gym equipment not only for the use of the Tavua Rugby Union but for all sports played by the young people of the town. I had no hesitation in saying “I’ll see what I can do”. Because as I keep repeating: the people of Tavua deserve to have the same facilities enjoyed by the residents of bigger towns and cities in Viti Levu, just as every Fijian deserves the same level of service, no matter where they live.

So now you have this equipment - $18,500 worth. Next, of course, you need the gym to house it in. And I’m assured that at the moment, a search is going on to find a suitable venue in town to keep these items properly.

And so today we remember the late Tui Tavua and his legacy to the people of this great part of the West and especially his commitment to the well-being of our young people.

Keeping fit is vitally important. I always say that 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 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and strokes.

So to the young people of Tavua I say: Dedicate yourselves to keeping fit. Use this equipment well. I’ll be keeping a close eye on the fortunes of the Tavua Rugby Club as they build up their strength on this equipment. And I wish the club and all the people of Tavua every success as I formally hand it over for your use and benefit.

Vinaka vakalevu.  Thank you.

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