

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

**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**

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**SPEECH AT THE LTA ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS BUS**

**LAUNCH**

**LTA HQ Thurs. 14th Nov.,2013**

**VALELEVU 1500 Hours**

Bula Vinaka and Good afternoon to you all

Two years ago on May 2011 we as a nation responded to a global call by the United Nations and other relevant international organization to join hands in a collective effort to fight, eradicate and eliminate unnecessary road fatality.

The UN Decade for Road Safety Action 2011-2020 which I had launch in 2011 was a perfect platform and an effective advocacy avenue for every Fijians to take necessary action about road safety.

Fiji did not only respond to the call of the Global community, we as a small vibrant nation took on upon us a responsive and a proactive role to be vigilant, sensitive and attentive to the call to control road fatality from further escalating domestically.

There were series of road safety campaigns and awareness that were planned, designed and implemented. These include the launch of Decade of Road Safety Actions Bill Boards which is now visible along the major Queens Highway and along the busy Suva-Nausori corridor.

This was later enhanced with the launch of Road Safety Tips Bill Board towards the end of 2011.

I’d also like to state here other series include the Speed walk campaign for a week around Viti-Levu and Vanua-Levu and the HMS Bilibili campaign last year from Delailasekau to Navuso via the Wainimala river.

I have been told that prior to this; LTA had already begun implementing road safety outreach program way back in 2009 with the launch of the “Arrive Alive Campaign”, the Arriving Safely Sticker Campaign, the in-vehicle safely stickers campaign and the slap on reflector bands campaign.

All the above were intended to raise awareness to reduce our national death toll which continued to experience an increasing trend.

Ladies and Gentleman I’m proud to say that from the above series of campaigns, Fiji managed to record for the first time in 25 years its lowest road fatality toll of 41 achieved last year.

But that is not the intension, government through the Land Transport Authority [LTA] and the Police will continue to pursue and explore every available avenue to enhance its collective effort in achieving an accident free road.

Today we are again breaking ground by launching this LTA Road Safety Bus which is expected to intensify the current road safety awareness and outreach momentum to a new height right across the country.

The Bus road safety campaign has been derived from the static decade of road safety action bill board campaign and the road safety tips bill board campaign allowing the authority to be more mobile and visible on the roads at all time.

This new concept will be the new means of visiting more community, villagers, settlements, schools, towns and selected maritime islands.

Ladies and Gentleman everyday someone is injured hospitalized or killed instantly on our local roads.

It is estimated close to 40 to 50 people die annually on our roads coursed through the sheer negligence of both the driver and pedestrian, ignoring the rule of driving, drink and drive and the most common course is over speeding.

Despite our stakeholders and other relevant authority’s effort in addressing the issue, the call has not been taken seriously by motorists and the travelling public and it is becoming a social stigma so hard to eradicate.

And as progress is being made to tackle other health concerns, the number one killer of people aged 15-29 years is no longer a deadly virus or disease, but a man-made hazard: road traffic crashes.

Government’s pursue to end road fatality has now become global. World body especially the United Nation's has endorsed that from 2011 to 2020 be declared as a Decade of Action for Road Safety aims to reduce global road traffic fatalities via coordinated worldwide safety programmed.

It clearly defines its importance and its essence must propel us as individual, as a family, community, church and as organization to embrace take ownership and practically live it everyday in the next 10 years and beyond.

The Road Safety Awareness Bus which will be launch today will allow the authority to embark on a more aggressive and cohesive campaign effort.

Furthermore to strengthen a framework or setting up of a precedent and long term program in eliminating road fatality and subsequently steer us through to 2020.

Government will continue to take a leading role in implementing the activities of the Decade, while fostering a multi-sectoral collaboration of efforts that includes major stakeholders, the private sector, professional associations, non-governmental organizations and civil society, youth organizations, and the media.

I also call upon the international organizations, development banks and funding agencies, foundations, professional associations and private sector companies to consider providing adequate and additional funding to activities relating to road safety.

The economic, social and health losses resulting from road traffic injuries are not inevitable. There is substantial evidence confirming that road traffic injuries can be prevented.

A number of factors have been identified as increasing the risk of traffic-related injuries, including inappropriate and excess speed, non-use of seat belts and child restraints, drinking and driving, non-use of helmets by riders of motorized two-wheelers, poorly designed or insufficiently maintained road infrastructure and vehicles that are old, not well maintained or that lack safety features.

Regulatory and other actions that address those risk factors have led to dramatic decreases in road crashes in many countries.

Therefore it is imperative for this Government to ensure the setting up of our own national road traffic casualty reduction targets to be achieved by the end of the Decade, in line with the plan of action that must pay particular attention to the needs of all road users, in particular pedestrians, and other vulnerable road users, through support for appropriate legislation, policy and infrastructure and by increasing sustainable means of transport.

Leading road safety experts reckon that sustained, coordinated road safety programmed could reduce the death toll by 50 per cent within the decade.

Without question, the issue of national road safety is one of our nation’s crucial objectives. With proper driver and pedestrian education, good roads, well maintained vehicles and a commitment by all stakeholders to be responsible in this regard, we will be able to address and have a better informed community, with a zero tolerance attitude towards road accidents.

Too many lives have been unnecessarily lost, because we neglect and risk the value of human life through non-compliance with road safety rules, and we forget the fact, that one cannot put a value to human life.

We must say, “No More!” We must support, embrace and take ownership of road campaign, to value and save lives.

Ladies and Gentleman with those few words and without further ado; it’s a joy for me to officially launch this new LTA Road Safety Awareness Bus today.

Thank you and God Bless Fiji.

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