

**COMMODORE JOSAIA VOREQE BAINIMARAMA, CF (Mil), OStJ, MSD, jssc, psc**

Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, Public Service, Peoples Charter for Change and Progress, Information, i-Taukei Affairs, Provincial Development, Sugar Industry, Lands and Mineral Resources

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 **OPENING OF TELECENTRE AT NADOGO SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Nadogo Secondary School Tues. 10th Sept., 2013

LABASA 1000 Hours

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**Minister for Communications,**

**Turaga Tui Nadogo;**

**Advisory Councilors;**

**School Management Board;**

**Staff and Students;**

**My Fellow Fijians.**

Bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

It’s a great pleasure to be in the North again and especially here in Nadogo as we open yet another of my Government’s Telecentres.

This is the second of five that I am launching in Vanua Levu this week. Yesterday, I opened a Telecentre at Seaqaqa Central College for the use of its 570 students during school hours and the rest of the community in the evening and on weekends.

My Government’s Look North Policy is one of the cornerstones of our reform agenda. We want to do more to develop Vanua Levu. And an important part of that is to give Northerners access to the telecommunications revolution that is transforming the lives of people across Fiji and across the world.

You all know that we’re doing a lot of work to improve the roads up here, and especially the highway between Nabouwalu and Dreketi to provide better access for people and goods across the top of the island.

Well this is a highway of another sort but just as important - giving ordinary Fijians access to the information superhighway and empowering them in a way that previous generations would never have imagined.

The Internet is one of the miracles of the modern age. It is opening up new horizons for people across the world. It is providing them with knowledge and skills. And today, it has come to Nadogo.

It is a wonderful way to communicate. Because you can not only email anyone, anywhere in the world with an email address (and the people here can also show you how to get one of those) but you can also speak over the Internet.

Through one of the chat services like Skype, someone here in Nadogo can have a conversation with someone in Nadi or New York or wherever else they might be in the world. And unlike the telephone, it’s free.

And you can also keep up with the news during perhaps the most exciting time in Fiji’s history. You can find out for yourself what is happening, not rely on information that is second hand and may be wrong.

We already have ten Telecentres operating in various parts of the country. And as of last week, 31,500 people were using them. With this centre and the other four we are opening in Vanua Levu today and tomorrow, this number is steadily increasing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As many of you know, Fiji’s new Constitution came into effect on Saturday after His Excellency our President gave his assent to it at a signing ceremony in Suva. It is the supreme law of the land and all other laws flow from it. And in a host of ways, it is fundamentally different to the three Constitutions Fiji has had since Independence.

For the first time, everyone is equal, everyone is called a Fijian and everyone will have a single vote – of equal value – when we go to the polls by no later than September next year.

Also for the first time, the constitution includes permanent rights to housing and sanitation, reasonable access to transportation, adequate food, clean water, a just minimum wage, social security schemes, health and sanitation. It protects the rights of land owners as well as the rights of tenants.

But personally, one of the parts I am most proud of is that it includes a Fijian’s right to education at all levels: primary, secondary and university. This means that any elected Government will have to do everything in its power to make education accessible to all Fijians, at all levels.

And in primary school, we’re also making the teaching of I’Taukei and Fiji Hindi compulsory under the new Constitution.

I’m proud to say, though, that in so many instances in the North, ordinary people already know both languages and have always communicated effectively. So I definitely regard the North as a beacon and role model for the rest of Fiji.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It’s important for you all to read the 2013 Constitution for yourselves. Today, I’ve brought copies to hand out to those who want to read it and I urge you all to do so. We have versions in English, i‘Taukei and Hindi for you to choose from. It is the way forward for every Fijian.

I have been struck by the enthusiasm ordinary Fijians are showing for the blueprint that will take us to the first genuine democratic election in our history next year.

On my visits to Nabouwalu and Seaqaqa yesterday, we distributed hundreds of copies and I signed many of them at the request of the local people. It’s obviously a document that Fijians already value and see as something they can treasure and pass down to their children.

As I said on Friday, the Constitution is the culmination of the revolution that the RFMF and I launched in December 2006 to put Fiji back on track after years of corruption and the rule of self interested politicians, who weren’t really interested in providing basic services to all Fijians.

The most important thing for me is for my Government to do what other governments didn’t – deliver services to all Fijians wherever they live. Better access to electricity, clean water, affordable housing, education and transport. Not just talk but action.

So with those words, it’s now my pleasure to declare Nadogo Secondary School Telecentre open.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

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