

**Commodore 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**

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SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF REFURBISHED RABI HEALTH CENTRE

Rabi Health Centre Mon. 11th March,2013

RABI 0800 Hours

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My fellow Fijians, **Bula Vinaka!**

I’m really pleased to be here to celebrate a very important milestone in the advancement of health service delivery on the island of Rabi – the opening of the refurbished Rabi Health Centre.

Rabi Island is one of the priority areas by the ministry of health with regard to Tuberculosis control program. The island has a very high prevalence rate for tuberculosis and is comparable with other high burden countries in Africa and Southeast Asia.

In 2010 alone, there were 14 newly diagnosed cases of TB in Rabi Island with a TB notification rate of 513 TB cases per 100,000 population which is 22 times higher than the national notification rate of 23/100,00 population. This means that, if not controlled, TB will wipe up the whole population of Rabi in just few years to come.

To address TB problem in Rabi, the ministry of health has identified that Rabi health center needs to be upgraded to DOTS or Directly Observed Treatment Short course center. This means that people in Rabi can readily access TB services for free.

As a DOTs treatment centre, the ministry of health has provided Rabi health centre with an x-ray machine and will have the capacity to conduct x-ray investigations to aid the doctors in the diagnosis of tuberculosis, as well as other ailments.

Rabi Health Centre will also be able to support the tuberculosis programme via laboratory diagnostic services of sputum processing for smearing and the processing of blood investigations. The centre will provide support to tuberculosis patients on treatment at the newly refurbished 10 bed inpatient ward and their families by supportive advice and counseling.

The Grant Management Unit of Global Fund based at the ministry of health headquarters in Suva is responsible for this refurbishment to ensure that Rabi health centre is up to standards as a DOTs centre.

Global Fund has provided the following assistance:

1. The Nei Wiraraa, a 7 footer fiberglass outboard sea ambulance
2. Suzuki motorcycle
3. 5 new beds
4. New 50 panel solar system
5. Refurbishment of the health centre building
6. Refurbishment of the x-ray room
7. Refurbishment of laboratory
8. Overseas training of the medical officer in TB treatment

Through Private- Public Partnership, the Rotary Club of Taveuni has donated a brand new incubator for new born babies and an ultrasound machine.

Through the People’s Charter which is the Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socioeconomic Development Pillar 10, my government is committed to improve health service delivery where

1. Communities are serviced by adequate primary and preventative health services thereby protecting, promoting and supporting their well-being and
2. Communities have access to effective, efficient and quality clinical health care and rehabilitation services.

How the Rabi Island Community Will Benefit from this?

Due to the availability of DOTs services in Rabi:

1. TB patients will remain in Rabi, close to their homes and families during the entire course of their treatment. They would be no longer sent to Labasa hospital or Tamavua hospital where they are usually admitted for 2 months before being sent home.
2. Patients will get support from the community in regards to family issues that isolation creates.
3. There will be reduction in the turnaround time for early diagnosis of tuberculosis, reducing the burden of deaths from tuberculosis as well as other illnesses resulting from the delayed diagnosis.
4. Incorporate community involvement by support and recreational activities with patients and the community as a whole.
5. Provide a safe and conducive environment for inpatients to recover quickly increasing their quality of life in the process and improvement of treatment success rates.
6. Allow health care facilitation due to long hospitalization in Rabi Health Centre in regards to promotion of wellness.

This is your health facility. Use it well and ensure that you come to this health centre during the first signs of your illness as early as possible or even while you are still well for screening to detect any illness.

Prevention is better than cure and the key to people’s wellness. I urge the Rabi Council of Elders and the people of Rabi to work closely with the staffs of Rabi Health Centre and other government departments to make Rabi Island a champion in Wellness and be declared as a Health Island Setting.

As a Healthy Island Setting, Rabi will be an island where children are nurtured in mind and body, where the environment invite learning and leisure, where the people work and age with dignity and where ecological balance is the source or people’s pride.

Health is everyone’s business! Let us work together towards a healthy and productive Promised Fiji.

Vinaka Vakalevu.