

**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 NEW PAPER POWER BUILDING**

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Navo Sat. 22nd Feb., 2014

NADI 1800 Hours

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**The Attorney-General and Minister for Industry and Trade,**

**The Directors, Management and Staff of Paper Power,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Bula vinaka and a very good evening to you all.

I’m delighted, as always, to be here in Nadi and especially for the opening of a new building in our “gateway” town.

The launch of Paper Power’s new head office is both a vote of confidence in Nadi and in the Fijian economy as a whole, which is enjoying a period of steady growth.

It underlines the fact that Fiji is open for business; it sets an example to others about the value of local investment in our nation; and it sends a clear message to everyone that Fiji has a bright future ahead of it as we move to one of the most decisive phases in our history – the introduction of our first genuine democracy within the next seven months.

Only twice before this time in Fiji’s history have we enjoyed such consistent economic growth. Our revised forecast growth rate is three-point-six per cent surpassing that of our bigger neighbours, Australia and New Zealand.

Many business people, professionals such as architects and engineers and construction companies are remarking about a buzz in the air – a sense of optimism, confidence, demand for services, new investment, creation of new jobs and of course expectation for this phenomenon to continue.

The country’s biggest revenue earner – tourism - new figures reveal that yields are increasing, with our international visitors not just continuing to arrive in large numbers but willing to spend more.

My Government has set about to create the right climate for new investment - with consistent policies, a sound and determined economic direction, focus on service delivery, modernizing our outlook and infrastructure and of course connecting us all to new technology. These coupled with the various concessions and incentives are clearly paying dividends.

In fact the savviest investors aren’t waiting for the general election to take place. If they haven’t already done so, they are investing now because they are convinced that things will only get better and they will ride a wave of prosperity to and beyond the election. Of course it will help if the right political party wins government!!!

All of this Ladies and Gentlemen demonstrates a marked level of confidence in the general state of the Fijian economy and my Government’s policy settings.

My Government regards the private sector as a vital partner in national development and the provision of better living standards for all Fijians. So I would like to thank our partner, Paper Power, for the investment that it has made in this new Head Office and Warehouse in Nadi and the jobs it is generating for our people.

Paper Power started from a single store in Nadi in 1992 and in those 22 years has expanded to six outlets in the Western Division – two in Nadi, one in Namaka, two in Sigatoka and one in Lautoka.

There’s a lesson for every Fijian young person about the value of hard work in the personal story of Gyanendra Deo of Paper Power.

He started his business career selling newspapers on the streets of Nadi. Then he joined the Desai Bookshop, worked his way up to manager and eventually started his own business, the Sigatoka Bookshop. From those modest beginnings grew the business we now see today, which currently provides employment for 25 people. I have great confidence in the ability of such home grown businesses to prosper even more.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I now have great pleasure in declaring this new Head Office open.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

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