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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 UPGRADING OF BAGASAU NURSING STATION**

**Bagasau Nursing Station Thurs. 24thApril, 2014**

**CAKAUDROVE 1240 Hours**

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**The Turaga na Tui ….**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Bula vinaka and a very good afternoon to you all.

I’m delighted to be here to share this day with the people of Bagasau as we celebrate the opening of this new staff accommodation at your Nursing Station.

Providing adequate health care for ordinary Fijians is one of my Government’s top priorities. In fact, we have an obligation to do so under the Constitution. So I’m very pleased that the facilities that other Fijians have come to expect in other parts of the country are also being upgraded at Bagasau.

This new accommodation for the nurses here recognises the value my Government places on looking after the welfare of health workers in more remote parts of Fiji. They have a job in looking after this community and they deserve the very best that we can give them. With better accommodation we expect the commitment of the health workers to do their jobs even better, will increase.

I also ask you to do everything you can to support them. They are here to look after you but I’d like to also encourage you all to do more to look after yourselves. Because 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.

Of course, you can do everything you can to look after yourself and still get sick. But at least help is close at hand and I know this facility has been a huge benefit for the people of this area.

As you all know, my Government is now providing free education to our primary and secondary school students and a tertiary loans scheme for those who want to go on to university or a technical college. We also have a fully paid scholarship for the top 600 students, no matter who they are, as long as they work hard.

But there is also much more that we want to do to provide ordinary Fijians with easier and more affordable access to health care. We have been making this a national priority and my Government will continue to invest in our public health system. But the upgrading of this Nursing Station is a sign of that commitment – to have a more healthy country as well as a clever country.

We also need to do a lot more to provide opportunities for ordinary people, especially in the North, to participate in the economy. To earn incomes, to sell things that they make or grow, or start small businesses. In fact tomorrow, I’ll be opening yet another of the Government’s Women’s Resource Centres in Bua to provide ordinary women with an income stream.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I was recently touring the country gathering the 5000 signatures I need to officially register my proposed political movement – the Proposed *“FijiFirst”.* It has been a wonderful experience to meet so many people face to face and I want to thank everyone who has turned out to greet me. Some of them, especially in the rural areas, have walked for hours to see me. I am both humbled and deeply appreciative.

Of course, I cannot start campaigning for the forthcoming election until my proposed movement is officially registered. I know I said I would do this by April 22nd. But I have had so many people saying they haven’t yet had the opportunity to add their signatures to my list, that I genuinely feel I owe it to them to give them the chance to do so. So I am extending my registration drive to allow that to happen and now hope to conclude the process in the next few weeks.

In the meantime, my focus is on meeting the needs of ordinary Fijians. And about me governing for all Fijians, no matter who they are or where they live. To make sure that you finally get the basic services that you and your family deserve and that previous governments didn’t provide.

I have a very simple philosophy as Prime Minister. Whatever your background is, however, old you are, wherever you come from or whatever religious beliefs you hold or denomination you belong to, if you want to work hard to make Fiji great, I’m with you. All the way.

The Government isn’t here to give you handouts. It is here to give you a leg-up. To empower you. To give you the things you need to help yourself.

We also want every Fijian, wherever they live, to have access to the same level of services. The people of the North should enjoy the same services as the people of Viti Levu. The people of Bagasau should have the same services as the people of Labasa or Savusavu. And we are doing everything we can as a Government to bridge the gap - whether it’s in health, education, or access to electricity, telecommunications and water.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to conclude, I would like to thank everyone involved in the task of getting this project off the ground – the people of Bagasau, the local Mataqali and the Ministry of Health.

As I keep stressing, we are here to serve the Fijian people and today marks yet another phase in serving the needs of the people of this part of the North.

I now have great pleasure in declaring the new staff accommodation at the Bagasau Nursing Station open.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

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