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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**

**REMARKS AT THE FIJI SUGAR CORPORATION SPORTS DAY**

Natabua High School Sat. 14th June, 2014

**LAUTOKA**  0900 Hours

Bula vinaka, everyone, and a very good morning to you all.

I’m delighted to be with you in Lautoka – the sugar city – for the Fiji Sugar Corporation Sports Day.

What a wonderful occasion and how great it is to see you all here – the men and women who are an integral part of this great industry and your families.

When I heard from your Executive Chair that this event was happening, I was determined to be here at Natabua High School to share in the excitement.

This is not the occasion for a long speech except to say that the whole country values the contribution each and every one of you is making to the prosperity of your fellow Fijians.

As you know, 200,000 people depend directly or indirectly on the sugar cane industry for a living. It is our country's second largest income earner and the hard work you all do benefits every Fijian.

In fact, many people had written the industry off. Yet all along, my Government has been determined to keep it alive.

And so we made the reforms that were needed, the tough decisions required so that all of you can continue to have jobs in the industry and provide for your families.

The new crushing season starts in a couple of days and I ask you all to put your hearts and souls into making it a success. And in return for all your hard work, I’ve got an announcement to make today.

In your next pay packet, every worker for the FSC is going to get a pay rise of five per cent backdated to the first of January of this year.

I want to say that all of you thoroughly deserve it. It isn’t a hand out, You earned it. It’s an acknowledgement of the hard work you put in last season. So congratulations!

You are an example to all Fijians of what can be achieved when workers, management and Government join hands for the good of everyone. You helped us make the reforms that were needed to put sugar on a proper footing and now you are reaping the rewards.

There are more benefits to be reaped if we continue with this collaboration in which we focus on the long term goals and sustainability.

So ladies and gentlemen sugar cane has turned the corner, just as our nation has turned the corner. And both the industry and our country can look forward to a much brighter future so long as we keep working hard and stay unified and focused.

To all of you, the staff, the management and the board, thank you very much for a wonderful effort.

And it now gives me great pleasure to declare the Fiji Sugar Corporation sports day open.

Vinaka Vakalevu, Thank you.

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