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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**

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**SPEECH AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE LAMI HIGH SCHOOL TELECENTRE**

Lami High School Tues. 1st July, 2014

LAMI 1400 Hours

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**The Director of Communications,**

**The Principal, Staff and Students of Lami High School,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**My Fellow Fijians.**

Bula Vinaka and a very good afternoon to you all.

It’s a great pleasure to be in Lami today to officially open yet another Government Telecentre – the latest in our communications revolution.

You are joining more than 77-thousand Fijians from around the country who are already using these Telecentres to connect to the Internet and enter the digital age.

Like the 24 others currently up and running, it is for the use of students during school hours and the rest of the community in the evening and on weekends.

While our primary focus has been on installing these facilities in rural and maritime areas, I have made sure that larger towns and cities are not overlooked.

I’ve been told that 65 per cent of Lami High School’s 352 students don’t have access to a personal computer and Internet connection at home. That’s more than 225 students. And this doesn’t even take into account the 5,000 members of the local community.

That’s why it’s so important that the benefits of this initiative are spread evenly around the country, urban and rural alike.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It’s not possible to overstate the power of the Internet. With the click of a mouse, you can access any piece of information ever known to mankind. You can connect with friends and family living halfway around the world just like they are sitting in your own living room. You can find out what’s happening in every corner of the globe and share your ideas and stories with people in other countries.

For some of you, this may all sound a bit intimidating at first; don’t feel bad if it doesn’t make sense straight away. There will be someone here to help you get the hang of it and I have no doubt that once you start exploring the Web, you’ll begin to understand how big the opportunities are.

Never before has technology had such an ability to end isolation and connect ordinary people to the wider world. The Internet is creating a community of global citizens and all you need for membership is access to a computer.

That’s why my Government is committed to giving every Fijian a passport to the digital world by making sure they have access to computers with an Internet connection.

Thanks to our Telecentres, thousands of people in Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Ovalau and Kadavu are connecting to the Web for the first time and I will not rest until Fijians everywhere have the same opportunity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Never before in Fiji’s history have young Fijians had so much opportunity to get on in life, to carve out worthwhile, interesting careers that will give them the ability to look after themselves and their families.

There has never been a better time to be Fijian, to be a citizen of a nation that stands tall and proud in the world, punches above its weight and has a wonderful future ahead of it. Provided we stay united, work together as a team, and care for each other.

I know that most young people I meet share this vision, this dream. And not just for themselves but for Fiji – one nation working towards a prosperous and just future for every single Fijian.

A Fiji that stands tall and proud in the world and that punches above its weight. A Fiji that is a leader in the region – the hub for trade, investment and technology.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I travel around the country speaking with ordinary people, one of the things that I hear most often is the complaint that in the past politicians would make all sorts of promises but would fail to keep them.

Breaking this shameful practice has been one of my proudest accomplishments as your Prime Minister. Since day one, my Government has always been more interested in delivering results than making promises. This Telecentre is proof of that commitment.

Now with Fiji headed towards a national election in just a few months’ time, I have faith in Fijians’ common sense and their ability to separate false promises and outright lies from the truth.

I’d like to give you a recent example, which is related to today’s event. One party recently announced that, if elected, they would launch a National Broadband Policy. I wonder if this party knows that Fiji already has such a policy – put in place by my Government – that was praised as the first of its kind in the region?

The bottom line is that Fijians know when they are being empowered, when they are finally getting the services they deserve - real benefits like free education, better housing, better roads, better access to electricity and water. And as in today, the opportunity to be connected to the wider world.

And so I urge you to think very carefully about who you are going to vote for in the upcoming election. It’s a very important decision that comes down to whose vision for the country you believe in the most – a stable, united, prosperous future for all or a return to the divided Fiji of old.

It has become increasingly clear that some people want to throw the country into reverse and drag us all back to the past.

Their petty squabbling and division has brought Fiji to its knees before and yet now they are trying to convince you that they can work together. It’s nothing more than a coalition of hypocrites.

The whole country knows that the only thing these parties have in common is opposition to my Government's reforms. They are united only by their determination to wind back the clock, to reject the advances of the past seven years and restore their own privileged positions at the expense of ordinary Fijians.

As a nation, we must say “no” to these tired old faces who are employing the same style of politics that we’ve experienced before. Now is the time to say “yes” to a new era of unity, stability and consistency.

With those words, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to officially open the Lami High School Telecentre.

Vinaka Vakalevu. Thank you.

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