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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 OPENING OF LOMAIVUNA HIGH SCHOOL**

**Lomaivuna High School Thursday, June 13th, 20123
NAITASIRI 11.30AM**

Attorney General and Minister for Communications;

The School Principal;

Staff, Students and Parents.

Bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

It’s a great pleasure to be here today as we open another of the Government’s Telecentres at Lomaivuna High School. Vinaka vakalevu for your warm welcome.

This is the second Telecentre I am opening this week. The first was on Monday at Lomary Secondary School in Namosi.

I’m personally very proud of these Telecentres. They play a key role in my Government’s work to empower all Fijians by providing free access to one of the great advances of the modern age, the Internet.

It wasn’t long ago that computers and the Internet were only for wealthier people in our town and cities. The opportunity to benefit from the information revolution was for them, not for ordinary people.

Not anymore. Every Fijian deserves equal access to the benefits of technology. That’s why my Government is bridging the digital divide between the rich and poor, and the urban and rural.

As a direct result of this initiative, more Fijians now have access to computers and the Internet than ever before.

Every time I open another Telecentre, hundreds – if not thousands – of Fijians are plugged into Fiji’s telecommunications revolution.

At Lomaivuna, more than 400 students and 3,000 members of the local community will have access to this facility.

What a difference this will make, especially for those who will be gaining access to a computer and the Internet for the first time.

You will join the ranks of close to 20,000 Fijians who are already using 10 community Telecentres around the country. By the end of this year, 60-thousand Fijians – including five thousand students – will have access to the Internet at more than 20 Telecentres across Fiji.

The facility will be used by schoolchildren during school hours and by the rest of the community after hours and on weekends.

You will be able to connect with friends and family in Fiji and abroad, search for jobs, do school work, research, print, scan and photocopy. The opportunities really are endless.

But there’s another reason why I believe these Telecentres are so important. They’re opening at a very exciting time in our country’s history, in the lead-up to parliamentary elections next year.

The Internet gives you a new way to stay up-to-date with what’s happening in Fiji. It empowers you to make your own decisions, and not rely on second-hand information.

And soon, Fiji will have a new constitution, which will guarantee and protect every person’s right to including housing and sanitation, reasonable access to transportation, adequate food, clean water, a just minimum wage, social security schemes, and education.

It will include the right to economic participation, which means that Government must do everything in its power to help people achieve a decent living for themselves and their families, no matter what their occupation.

These rights cannot be tampered with or weakened in any way. Because Fijians know that different governments have delivered very different results, especially for ordinary people. This is no longer the case under my Government nor should it be the case in the future.

As I keep saying wherever I go, service delivery is my Government’s most important task – to not just promise better access to things like electricity, clean water, affordable housing, education and transport, but to provide it.

As a Government, we deliver. We empower ordinary Fijians. We give you the basic things you need to improve your lives and the lives of your families.

This includes better access to telecommunications, which is why we are all here today.

So, with those words, it is now my pleasure to declare the Lomaivuna High School Telecentre open.

Vinaka Vakalevu. Thank you.

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