

**Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama,**

*CF(Mil), OSt.J, MSD, jssc, psc*

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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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**Official Opening of the New Moto Bridge and Moto Road**

China Railway 1st Group Campsite, Fri. 4th October, 2013

**Moto Road, BA** 1600 Hours

* ***Cabinet Ministers;***
* ***Your Excellency, Ambassador to Fiji for the People's Republic of China, H.E. Mr Huang Young;***
* ***Turaga na Tui Ba;***
* ***The Chairman and Management and Staff of Fiji Roads Authority;***
* ***CEO and Staff of China Railway First Group;***
* ***My Fellow Fijians.***

Bula Vinaka and good afternoon to you all.

I am very happy to be with you in Ba to officially open the new Moto Bridge, together with 5 kilometers of new sealed road.

It’s been a long journey to today, after the old bridge was washed away in the January 2012 flood. Since then, not one, but two Irish crossings had to be built here after the first was destroyed in the March flood, which devastated the entire Western Division.

While the Irish Crossing was a necessary and important temporary measure, it prevented passage during high water. No longer.

Now, the temporary crossing has given way to a new, permanent bridge. And that in itself is a symbol of my commitment to you and to rural communities throughout Fiji. It is a mark of permanence, an investment in this community, in the people who live and work here.

This bridge is a life-line for those who rely on it. It provides thousands of Fijians access to towns and hospitals.

It provides children access to schools. And it provides farmers access to markets.

Across the bridge, we have one primary and one secondary school, a health centre and the water reservoir, all of which sustain this community.

The bridge also forms a vital link in a major supply route for sugar cane to the Rarawai Mill. For the last two seasons, the crossing’s unreliability dealt a big blow to the industry here.

Many sugar cane farmers have held back on planting new ground because they didn’t trust the crossing, especially during bad weather. And there was also far too much stand-over cane for the same reason.

The new Moto Bridge will give farmers peace of mind knowing that the cane they plant will get to the mill no matter what the weather. They will no longer have to risk their money and their immense effort on the chance their cane won’t make it.

That’s why a bridge immune to flooding is so important. It will once again unlock this area’s potential.

As you know, my Government has made the revitalisation of the Sugar Industry a major national priority, and I am proud to say that we are already seeing results.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My Government is committed to fulfilling our responsibilities to the Fijian people: to keep our citizens safe from harm; to help our citizens when catastrophes hit; to provide services collectively that people cannot be expected to provide for themselves; and to maintain a climate in this country in which people are free to produce, to innovate, and to earn a living that will support themselves and their families.

We do this in many ways—by building new schools, roads and bridges or fixing old ones; by providing new services or making the existing services run better; by supporting the old industries that Fijians rely on for a living or helping create new ones; and by establishing laws and policies that encourage investment and reward your hard work.

This bridge should remind you that the Government is accountable to you- the people of Ba.

Earlier this afternoon I also announced that we will build a new hospital for Ba at the cost of 23.26 million dollars.

Phase 1 will commence next year at the cost of 7.3 million dollars. We all know that Ba needs a new hospital.

We now have a new Constitution. One that establishes the legal and moral basis for a common and equal citizenry without denying anyone’s individuality or culture. A single, united nation. For the first time, every person born in Fiji has the right to call themself a Fijian. No one must ever be considered a second class citizen again.

For the first time ever, we have a Constitution which in its Bill of Rights protects the rights of land ownership and a right to a fair return and also at the same time protects the rights of tenants and lessees to secure a just, fair and reasonable terms and conditions of land leases and tenancies.

And in less than one year we will have free and fair elections—the very first elections in this country where every Fijian’s vote counts equally.

The new Constitution gives every Fijian the right to housing and sanitation, reasonable access to transportation, education, adequate food, clean water, a just minimum wage, social security schemes, health services and sanitation. It guarantees freedom of expression, religion and assembly, and it grants specific rights to children and the disabled.

This is your Constitution. It ensures that power lies with Parliament, which is elected and accountable to you, the people. There is even a provision that allows for a referendum. None of Fiji’s previous constitutions has ever given so much direct power to the will of the people.

It creates a Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission and an Accountability and Transparency Commission. None of Fiji’s previous constitutions has ever created such bodies to keep public officials, civil servants and parliamentarians accountable.

I urge each of you to read and understand the new Constitution. You must choose a party to form a Government that is future focused, cares for all Fijians, and has sound economic policies to grow the economy, create jobs and improve your livelihoods **and** it must not be corrupt.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would now like to thank all those involved with this project, including the Exim Bank of China for providing the loan and the China Railway First Group for completing the construction.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my great pleasure to officially open the Moto Bridge.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

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