

**COMMODORE JOSAIA VOREQE BAINIMARAMA, CF (Mil), OStJ, MSD, jssc, psc**

Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, Public Service, Peoples Charter for Change and Progress, Information, i-Taukei Affairs, Provincial Development, Sugar Industry, Lands and Mineral Resources

**Your Excellencies;**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**

**Chairman and Members of the Public Service Commission;**

**Our Special Guest, Mr Antonius Tanan;**

**Permanent Secretaries;**

**Distinguished Guests;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Ni sa bula vinaka and a very good evening to you all.

It is a great pleasure for me—both personally and as Prime Minister—to be with you to recognise the extraordinary achievements of some outstanding people who are working in the service of our nation.

As you know, one of my highest priorities as Prime Minister is to ensure that the Fijian government delivers services to its citizens efficiently, equitably, and even enthusiastically.

This is a mission that we will always have before us. The continuous pursuit of excellence must be more than a slogan or a mantra. We must always find ways to improve, to innovate, to do more with less, and to overcome challenges—no matter how well we think we are doing.

We rely on the Civil Service not just to keep the country running, but also to help the national leadership anticipate needs and chart the future. Career public servants owe their loyalty to all Fijians.

That means they must work faithfully under the national leadership. The leadership sets priorities and major direction, but the people depend on the Civil Service to execute programs.

You are the continuity in government, the institutional memory, and the technical experts. The people need you, and they have a right to expect that you will dedicate yourselves to their welfare.

I believe that Civil Service is more than a job, and I know that the people being honoured here tonight share that opinion. Civil Service must be a calling.

Yes, you are paid, but you are paid not just for your time on the job. You are paid for your energy, your talents, and your dedication. The work you do every day is an act of both public service and patriotism, and every public servant must take personal pride in his or her job.

What does that kind of pride look like? It can be something as small as making sure that a citizen who calls with a question gets the information they need rather than simply being passed to another office.

It may mean staying late to make sure that a job is done right. It may mean speaking up when you think something is wrong. It may mean coming up with a better way to perform a task or project. Pride is caring.

People who are proud of themselves and their work care that it is done right, and people who care about their fellow citizens will always show pride in their work.

Tonight, we are going to hear about accomplishments, about projects that were carried out well and ideas that made a difference in important government programs.

It will be easy to become so impressed with the end results that we lose sight of how those results were achieved.

But I ask all of you to look at the values and qualities that lie behind those victories. These are the values and personal qualities that will drive us continually to be a better government and a more accomplished people.

I understand that the Civil Service is adopting standards and values for project and program management, and I applaud you for that.

 But, good government will never be achieved solely by acquiring and refining management skills. Strong positive values, innate good qualities that are personally driven, and simple good character are essential qualities for a public servant.

We are a small nation with great ambitions, and our Civil Service needs to demonstrate these kinds of values and qualities every day if we are to realize our ambitions for development, honest government, and true equality.

Values like:

• Personal responsibility, the willingness to take ownership of actions, decisions and outcomes

• Dedication, the commitment to making sure that you are working to fulfill our purposes

• Ingenuity, the ability to bring all of one’s creativity and critical thinking to the job

• Courage, the willingness to strive even in the face of adversity

• Adaptability, the ability to find ways to solve problems and overcome obstacles

• Integrity, Honesty, the absolute refusal to tolerate corruption or dishonesty in any form and at any level, and the adoption of high standards of personal behaviour

• Selflessness, the willingness to share resources and credit in order to get things done for the people

• Being just and fair, the utter refusal to accept or tolerate any form of discrimination and always being fair without fear or favour

• Empathy, the ability to keep before you the needs of the people of Fiji, many of whom depend on government programs as a genuine lifeline and

• Energy, the force that drives you to come to work every day with enthusiasm for what you can accomplish and to not rest until you have done all you can.

I believe these are the qualities we recognise today.

And I also give these words of advice to all those who will hire new employees in the public service: Don’t just look for skills and experience. Look for good character as well. Skills and experience can be learned, but good character is priceless.

We must also ensure that we hire and promote civil servants on merit. Our Constitution demands that age, gender, ethnicity and religion must not be barriers.

We must choose the best people who will always ensure, come what may, that nothing is more important to them than serving all Fijians in a spirit of patriotism.

As you know, I have been critical of the Civil Service in the past. I think we all understand that in the Civil Service, like virtually all institutions, there are people who take little pride in their work, who seek to do as little as possible, and who occupy positions that could go to deserving people who will work with a positive attitude and loyalty.

Those people are still with us, although I believe their numbers are slowly diminishing. Some have resigned, some have retired, and some may have changed.

I believe that together we are winning the effort to build a more professional Civil Service. You are the vanguard, and it is my hope that you will lift the non-performers by both example and by sound management.

Show them a higher standard. Expect and demand more from them. Show them the joy that comes from being fully committed to a mission and actually seeing the tangible results of their work.

 They will either respond and improve or find another occupation—voluntarily or not.

For our part, we as government have also been focussed on improving the working terms and conditions of all civil servants.

These not only include additional benefits for those serving in the remote areas, but also targetted pay rises, training and up-skilling and building tangible and specialised career paths.

This important restructuring will continue to ensure that the working environment and conditions for all civil servants become comparable- if not better than- the private sector.

The people honoured here tonight represent something different. They represent the new standard for government, the example of how those values and qualities that I mentioned can do great things.

I am proud of what my government has accomplished, some of which include;

The reforms in our taxation laws,

The reform of the ports,

The adoption of sound procedures to prepare for and respond to disasters,

The ongoing effort to improve the condition of our roads,

The reform of social welfare to ensure that the neediest are cared for and that we do not foster dependency,

The extension of the benefits of education to as many young Fijians as possible, and the recruitment and promotion of civil servants on merit- not on other considerations such as ethnicity or personal connections.

We have depended on able and committed career public servants to carry out all of these reforms and programs, and we will continue to rely on you.

I thank all of you who have given your energy, talents and hard work to our efforts to give the Fijian people the kind of government they deserve, a government that serves the people and delivers services proudly, intelligently and efficiently.

Of course, this is what we seek in recognizing outstanding achievements tonight.

This is what we seek in the management processes we are putting in place.

This is what we seek for our government.

We must commit ourselves to raising the standard, to creating a new sense of what we expect as normal behaviour and normal performance in public service.

The term *“standard”* has an interesting history. In the days when wars were fought by men with swords, axes and clubs, one rider held the flag—the standard—high for all to see.

Men on horses or on foot would rally to the standard, confronting the enemy and pushing forward toward victory.

The standard bearer was courageous; he was out front, showing the way. If he fell, someone took his place, because all could be lost if the warriors were to lose sight of the standard.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you are the standard bearers. I urge to you go forth proudly and continue to be the example around which all public servants can rally.

If you do not falter, your example will take our public service to new heights. The Fijian people deserve no less.

I wish you all an enjoyable evening.

Thank you. Vinaka vakalevu.

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