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**Rear Admiral J.V. Bainimarama, CF(Mil), OSt.J, MSD, jssc, psc**

**Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, the Public Service, People’s Charter and Change and Progress, Information, I - Taukei Affairs, Provincial Development, Sugar Industry and Lands and Mineral Resources**

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**PRIME MINISTER’S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE LOMAIVITI PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MEETING**

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**Levuka Mon. 28th July, 2014**

**OVALAU 0930 Hours**

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**My Countrymen,**

**Leaders of respective TIKINA and YASANA,**

**Members of the Lomaiviti Development**

**Committees and Respective Chiefs.**

Bula Vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

I am very delightful to be in LOMAIVITI for the opening of the LOMAIVITI Provincial Council meeting.

We all know that this year is a very challenging year for the people of Fiji, especially when the Government is fully geared towards the preparations of elections to be held on the 17th of September 2014. This is in line with the road map that has been earlier devised for FIJI to transit back to democratic rule.

While focus is on the elections, I would like to highlight that our Government also has certain strategies to meet its intended outcomes for the development of our nation and especially for the maritime areas. Our government has been a pivotal role in moving its services to the communities of maritime areas and such it has budgeted a total of 11.5 million alone for the eastern division this year.

I may now take this opportunity to emphasize on some major activities that had emerged in the Lomaiviti group over the past few years. Such developments have been crucial in ensuring that people, especially in our rural communities are not neglected in meeting their both economic and social needs.

Major Recent Developments

Infrastructure plays a very crucial role in people’s everyday lives and is one of the key policies for the Fijian government. Basic infrastructure investment in the development of roads, schools, hospitals, jetties, etc. is essential to both economic development and the quality of life.

Since 2011, a number of development projects have been completed within the Lomaiviti group. While some projects are earmarked for completion this year, others are also planned for implementation next year. Some crossings have been constructed at a cost of approximately $508,127, namely Lamiti, Qarani, and Navukailagi Foot crossing. An Irish crossing has also been constructed in Lovoni to allow the movement of vehicles. These crossings provide communities with easy and reliable access to basic services such as schools, health centers, markets …….etc.

Under the Infrastructure sector, the electricity grid from Nauouo to Rukuruku to Cawatara was extended for the supply of power to the households. This was undertaken at a cost of around $740,000 by the FEA. The Ovalau Island Circular road was also upgraded by the FRA with a cost of $148,000.

With regards to the health sector, a nursing station was constructed in Batiki with a cost of $190,000 to improve the health service delivery. The focus was to serve the health needs of the people living in the village and also the nearby communities as and when the need arises.

Moreover, the RFMF Engineers are currently working on the construction of Malawai Foot crossing, which is expected to be completed by mid-August this year. The total cost of this project is $155,960. A District Office and a Grade 6 Quarters in Gau also commenced construction in the beginning of July this year by the Ministry of Works at a total cost of $586,827.

In addition to this, the maintenance of road in Gau and Koro is earmarked for completion this year by the FRA at a cost of $375,000 respectively. Out of the 57.3km road network for Koro, 12km needs mechanical maintenance and these works are being tendered and will be completed in 2014. The road sides cleaning (spraying & grass cutting) by maintenance crew is currently underway which is expected to complete by end of August. Pavement patching & culvert cleaning will be undertaken afterwards. For Gau, maintenance crew are completing the cleaning of 22km of road. The major maintenance works is being tendered and will be done in conjunction with the road works for Koro.

For Ovalau, the grading of all gravel roads occurs on a cyclic basis by FRA – approx. once every 6-8 weeks. The spot metalling on unsealed roads is undertaken as need arises. Significant bridge maintenance and repair works have been undertaken and seawall renewal has almost completed.

The works at Qarani Jetty will commence in September this year at a total cost of $11.1m.

Regarding the income generating projects, a Memorandum of Agreement has recently been signed between the Ministry of Strategic Planning and Department of Fisheries to identify the potential for fisheries development in the Lomaiviti group. Plans are also in process to identify the potential for agricultural activities for communities in the Province.

Public Sector Investment Projects (PSIP) planned for 2015 budget consideration are:

* Establishment of DOs Office & Quarters in Koro - $704,000
* Completion of Waiting Shed in Koro - $100,000
* Repair of Suspension Bridge in Levuka - $150,000
* Construction of Toki and Tokou Riverwall - $200,000 each

Some of the following are to be done by FRA in 2015:

* Bureta Health Centre frontage sealing
* Waitovu Stretch sealed road rehab 600m long programmed
* Sealing of 2 village frontage which will continue in 2016 and 2017

Our Government stands firm in ensuring that the communities in the maritime areas are not deprived of their individual livelihood and that movements in terms of sea going vessels have been improved over the years. The building of resilient communities to counter disaster affected areas and the improvement of public infrastructure to reinforce the economic activities in small and isolated islands.

In this note, I have great pleasure in declaring the Lomaiviti Provincial Council meeting open.

May God’s blessings be upon us all.

Vinaka Vakalevu.

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