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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**

**Commissioning Address for the Inbound Baggage Screening Machines**

**Arrival Concourse 2nd July, 2013**

**NADI AIRPORT 0900 Hours**

Executives and Board Members;

Senior Government Officials;

Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It’s a great pleasure and I’m duly honoured to officiate in the commissioning of the four (4) x-ray machines for Nadi International Airport this morning. Vinaka vakalevu for your warm welcome.

Indeed, I’m personally proud of the achievement on the procurement of the *“state of the art”* machines as this significantly indicates the collaborative and integrated efforts embarked by key stakeholders, at least to mention, the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority, the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, the Airports Fiji limited and of course the support from the Ministry of Defence, National Security & Immigration.

Nadi International Airport is the gateway to many countries. It is also considered a high risk as this is one of the major entry points that receives diverse array of people from all walks of life on a daily basis. The rapid movement of people nowadays as compared to the last decade has proven to us that globalisation and trade liberalization have dramatically changed the way we live, think, and interact globally.

We are connected to a global village where people with enthusiastic passions travel more often than before to discover business opportunities, for holidays, establish friendships through cultural and religious ties and more so, seek a second home to live.

My Government considers the tourism industry as a critical sector in our economic growth. Moreover, the Western Division is renowned for hosting most of our guests for leisure, businesses and ventures and is the cornerstone of our economy with our current tourism earnings todate of over $1.3b.

Fiji, since the 2nd Quarter of this year, receives approximately 196,891visitors at our two main airports alone, which is an increase of 33,554 visitors when compared to end of 1st Quarter. This is a very significant increase and therefore my Government is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for visitors including investors alike. All these mean new opportunities for commerce, enterprise and holiday destiny.

In the last decade, the dynamics of trade in the free movement of cargoes and people have posed one to wonder whether this would bring about prosperity and wealth to our people and to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich. However, regrettably to note, we are being barraged by a percentage of smart criminals. The vibrant of activities is no doubt intertwined with illicit activities.

On the international front, more countries have now realized the scourge of globalization in all its forms as the strategic security environment has changed dramatically as a consequence. New security concerns have emerged and our island states, including Fiji are trying constantly to grapple with the diverse implications. Issues such as human and drugs trafficking and including money laundering are coming to the fore.

Consequently, in the foreseeable future, island states are likely to be preoccupied with domestic trouble and non-military threats from international syndicate groups.

This would have adverse implications to our international credibility as non-state actors are able to exploit the state’s economic prospects and encourage the growth of non-state illegal activities inside government and institutional framework. The activities of choice for which non-state actors may engage in, includes:

* Terrorism
* Transnational crime
* Money laundering
* Human and Drug Trafficking
* Arms smuggling and
* Counterfeiting

Fiji, being the hub of the Pacific is a major cross-road for criminal activities. Gangland style murders, passport fraud including credit card fraud with international connections are quite extensive. Fiji’s geographical isolation and our limited capabilities have strengthened advanced criminals to exploit our challenges.

I also note the obligations under the various international conventions in which Fiji is a party to, requires our incalculable commitment. The modern approach to automation is inevitable given the evolving technology such as electronic clearance upon disembarkation etc. We must now lay the platform for modernization.

Therefore, my Government is committed to comply with these international instruments (ICAO, UN Resolutions 1373) to providing better systems for the safety and security of the travelling public.

In May this year, the Immigration Department launched a new system called Integrated Border Management Systems (IBMS) that allows them to access freely on information of the travelling public much earlier.

Now, we are here to commemorate the commissioning of the Inbound Baggage Screening System which again is an indication of

my Government’s commitment to addressing the challenges at the border.

With the provision of these x-ray machines, I must expect a working culture that is of international standard and efficient, indiscriminative, which translates to collaboration and cooperation to achieving maximum output at the border.

The signing of the MOU this morning attests to the collaborative efforts of the Fiji Revenue Customs Authority, Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, Border Police, Airports Fiji Limited and the Ministry of Defence.

I must also make mention of my Government’s commitment to embark on phase 2 of the Nadi Airport Inbound Baggage Screening System which will involve automation of inbound baggage screening. On this note, I request Airports Fiji Limited to seriously consider incorporating phase 2 of the IBSS in its Nadi International Airport modernization Project as this will augur well with its international and national image.

The changes would no doubt raise the level of credibility for Nadi International Airport as one of the safest airport in the region and secure, peaceful place to visit.

With those few words, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to commission the 4 x-ray machines.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

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