

**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

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**OPENING OF TELECENTRE AT LABASA MUSLIM SCHOOL**

**Labasa Muslim College Wed. 11th Sept.,2013**

**LABASA 1000 Hours**

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**Minister for Communications;**

**Turaga Tui Wailevu;**

**President of the Macuata Muslim League;**

**Advisory Councillors;**

**Staff and Students;**

**My Fellow Fijians.**

Bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

It’s a great pleasure to be with you today in Labasa on this, the final day of my current visit to Vanua Levu.

It’s been a wonderful experience to meet so many people in the North over the past three days.

The clear message I’ve been getting, especially in my talanoa sessions, is that the people of the North agree with me when I say that service delivery – meeting their needs for basic services - is my Government’s most important task.

Better access to electricity and water, better health services and education, better roads, better access to government agencies.

To the people of the North: I hear you, loud and clear. Years of neglect by previous governments cannot be rectified overnight. But we’re working on it.

You are already seeing some of the results of that work. But there’s a lot more to be done and my Government will not rest until it **IS** done. Because unlike previous governments, we don’t make empty promises. We deliver. We are genuinely here to serve.

It’s been a special pleasure on this visit to meet so many of our young people, who - as we all know- are the future of our great country and who carry our hopes on their shoulders for even better days ahead.

To all of you at the Labasa Muslim College, I say: Everything my Government does is designed to be in your best interests, to give you a leg up in life.

We constantly look to the future, not the past, and imagine how much greater Fiji could be if we can give our young people a better start – better health, better education, better opportunities to get good jobs - satisfying jobs and not just menial work.

And, of course, better access to knowledge and the wider world, which is why we are all here today. Because that is what my Government’s Telecentres are ultimately all about.

This is Telecentre Number 14, after the three I’ve already launched in Vanua Levu this week - at Seaqaqa Central College, Nadogo Central College, and Shri Guru Khalsa College **-** and the ten previously opened, which are dotted around the rest of the country. Later today, I’ll be opening the 15th in Savusavu.

By the end of my Northern tour, more than 2,000 students and many more ordinary Fijians will have gained regular, affordable access to the Internet.

But this is just the start of what I regard as one of my Government’s most important programs.

We have a vision of a smarter Fiji taking a leadership role in our region and being at the forefront of the effort to improve the lives of all Pacific peoples. And that means a smarter population, Fijians who are better educated and better informed.

Everything we do is designed to achieve that vision - whether it’s training our young people to be trades people or farmers, giving people better access to scholarships or in this instance, giving ordinary Fijians better access to information.

Our new Constitution – that passed into law at the weekend – specifically states that our young people are entitled to primary, secondary and tertiary education. You can read it for yourself – as well as all the other provisions – in the copies that I’ve brought with me to distribute here today in English, iTaukei or Hindi

It’s an ambitious clause. But I don’t want any smart child in Fiji to be held back because his or her parents can’t afford a better education.

We all know that it’s happened in the past and unfortunately it still happens now. But Fiji can never be judged to be a fair country, let alone a smart country, if even one child is left behind. That is why we are currently reviewing our education funding programs to provide a helping hand to those Fijians who most need it.

Similarly, every Fijian deserves better access to information, and that is why these Telecentres are so important. Because we can all be smarter if we make full use of them and the opportunities they provide.

All over the world, the Internet has transformed the way people access information. You need to be able, of course, to recognise what is accurate and what isn’t. Not everything on the Internet is useful or worthwhile. But the fact remains that in seconds, almost everything known to mankind can be within your reach.

And at these Telecentres, access is free. No need to go to town anymore and pay someone at a shop or cafe to use the Internet. The Government is paying for you to have access as part of its program of service delivery to ordinary Fijians.

We want to empower you by giving you things you need to improve your lives and those of your families. And that includes access to communications and a whole range of basic rights laid out in the new Constitution – the right to earn a proper living, to get adequate food and clean water – rights that can never be taken away.

I encourage you all to take a copy with you. Read it and talk about it. Because it’s the blueprint for our future, a future in which every Fijian finally gets an equal opportunity to get on in life.

It’s also the basis on which we will hold the first genuinely democratic election in our history next year. I urge all of you who are turning 18 before that election to registered for it and have your say in the future of our country.

So the future is bright and we now all have an equal place in it. As young people, I want you to dream, to reach for the stars. Work hard at your studies. Take advantage of the opportunities you’re being given to acquire knowledge and skills. Together, we can all make a difference as we build a better Fiji for you and the generations to come.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

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