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

**Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry**

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**SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE NAKASI HIGH SCHOOL TELECENTRE**

**Nakasi High School Fri. 7th Nov., 2014**

**NAKASI 1400 Hours**

**The Board, Principal and Staff of Nakasi High School,**

**Students of the School,**

**My Fellow Fijians,**

Bula Vinaka and a very good afternoon to you all.

I’m delighted to be in Nakasi today to officially open yet another Government Telecentre – the first such opening since the election and the latest in our ongoing communications revolution.

I always take great pleasure in presiding over these events because I can see from the enthusiasm of everyone how much our Telecentres mean to ordinary Fijians, and especially our young people.

I can feel their excitement and share their joy as a whole new world of opportunity opens up for them. And I can share the pride of their teachers and parents as we give them an opportunity that we never had but which holds out so much promise as we strive to become a smarter nation.

Today you are joining more than 104-thousand Fijians from around the country who are already using these Telecentres to connect to the Internet and enter the digital age.

Like the 25 others currently up and running, it is for the use of students during school hours and the rest of the community in the evening and on weekends.

While our primary focus has been on installing these facilities in rural and maritime areas, we’re making sure our urban, peri-urban and towns and cities are not overlooked.

Because while the Internet is freely available in urban areas, not everyone can afford a computer or an Internet Service Provider. And that’s where the Government comes in, providing you with access free of charge.

I’m very pleased to hear that in Nakasi, more than 200 people have already been accessing these computers and we naturally expect that number to rise after the official launch today.

As I’ve said before, It’s impossible to overstate the power of the Internet. With the click of a mouse, you can access any piece of information known to humans. You can connect with friends and family all over the world. You can find out what’s happening in every corner of the globe and share your ideas and stories with people in other countries.

Thanks to our Telecentres, tens of thousands of people in Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Ovalau and Kadavu are connecting to the Web for the first time and, as I have also said before, I will not rest until Fijians everywhere have the same opportunity.

You’ll notice that I’m not asking any of you today who you voted for or whether you support me or not.

There’s been a lot of fuss made about some off-the cuff-remarks I made in Vanua Levu a couple of weeks ago. They’ve been taken totally out of context and used by certain politicians to suggest that I’m only interested in providing Government services to my own supporters.

Our aim is to develop the entire country, which includes the North. We want to give people living there the same level of services enjoyed by those living in Viti Levu. So we are providing the infrastructure that’s needed to make that happen – better roads, access to electricity and water, better schools, better health clinics.

The overwhelming majority of people in the North support our program – ending their isolation, giving them opportunities. But in my off-the-cuff remarks, I said I was worried that a high number of villages in Vanua Levu didn’t want development because they didn’t choose FijiFirst, they chose SODELPA.

I said this because SODELPA, its leadership, its candidates and its supporters, weren’t development focused. Their entire election platform was based on lies, fear-mongering and racism. I stressed that we were an inclusive government. So we were going to prioritise developments to those who needed them.

Let me make this perfectly clear: I did NOT say we are going to provide development only to those who support Fiji First. To claim otherwise is simply untrue.

But it suits some of my political opponents – who hardly did anything themselves to develop the North – to twist my words for their own purposes. It gives them an excuse to justify their own lack of action when they were in office.

So let me draw a line under this once and for all. I have said repeatedly that I govern for all Fijians, that I will leave no-one behind. And I have been consistent about this right from the time I assumed office in 2006. Right through the People’s Charter. Right through the years in which we made the reforms that were necessary to set Fiji up for a better future. Right through the lead-up to the first genuinely democratic election in our history. Right through the election campaign. And right through my Party’s landslide victory.

I said it in my election victory speech. I said it at the United Nations. I said it in my maiden speech in the Parliament. So take heed of what I said then and take heed of what I say now.

I govern for all Fijians, no matter who they support and who they vote for. I intend to leave no-one behind, whether they voted for FijiFirst, SODELPA, NFP, Labour, the PDP or anyone else.

We are all Fijians and as I have also said repeatedly: I am the Prime Minister of all Fijians, for all Fijians. I don’t care who you are or what your background is. If you want to work hard to build our nation and give our children a better future, I am with you. All the way.

I guess I need to get used to being a politician and having my words dissected but today I just wanted to clear up any misunderstanding among ordinary voters about where they really stand.

I also think it says a lot about some of my opponents when they leap on something like this, trying to get people to judge me on the odd stray comment rather than our deeds as a Government – our impressive record of service delivery to every part of the nation. They are playing cheap politics.

I can tell you it was very dispiriting sitting in the new Parliament seeing some of these tired old faces making their maiden speeches and having nothing new to say. You’d think that they would have used the past eight years to come up with some fresh ideas. But instead we got the same old ones - the same old lies, the same old fear tactics and even someone raising the spectre of another coup.

Compare their record to ours. We have unified Fiji in a way they were never even interested in doing. While they tried to divide us, we have made us stronger as a nation. And we have made our economy stronger and given people confidence and hope.

I am happy to be judged on my record again in four years’ time. Because while they bark from the sidelines and appear in the Fiji Times every day, I intend to remain focused on delivering the best infrastructure, the best services and the best opportunities, including education, for all Fijians.

I intend to redouble our efforts to take our beloved nation forward and take every Fijian with us.

I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again. Never before in Fiji’s history have young Fijians had so much opportunity to get on in life, to carve out worthwhile, interesting careers that will give them the ability to look after themselves and their families.

I know that most young people I meet share our vision and our dream. And not just for themselves but for Fiji – one nation working towards a prosperous and just future for every single Fijian.

A Fiji that stands tall and proud in the world. A Fiji that is a leader in the region – the hub for trade, investment and technology.

This Telecentre – and the 25 others throughout the rest of Fiji and counting - is proof of that commitment and I urge you all to make full use of it.

I look forward to meeting more of you this afternoon and especially our young people. And I now have the great pleasure to officially declare the Nakasi High School Telecentre open.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

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