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**Commodore 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, iTaukei Affairs,, Sugar Industry and Lands and Mineral Resources**

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**SPEECH AT THE RABI JETTY**

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**Tabiang Wed. 13th Mar., 2013
RABI 1400 Hours**

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The Minister for Provincial Development;

Permanent Secretaries;

The Chairman of the Rabi Island Council;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Bula vinaka and a good afternoon to you all.

I’m very pleased to be in Rabi today as my tour of the Northern Division continues and meet many of our Fijians of Banaban descent.

I’m here to listen to your concerns and to see the progress being made in the Government’s program to deliver better services to you and your families.

I’ve had a busy time so far. This morning I opened a new ice plant to help local fisherman explore new fishing opportunities and expand their commercial activity; I launched an exciting new fish farming initiative; and I opened a revamped Health Centre to address the alarming rate of TB on the island.

My fellow Fijians, all of this is part of my Government’s promise to deliver better services and to create new opportunities for the people of the Northern Division, who have understandably felt neglected in the past.

We want to empower you by giving you the things you need to stand on your own feet and to improve your lives and those of your families.

Our promises are not empty words to win support - which we all know is what happened with previous Governments. We intend to deliver on the promises we make.

In order to do this, Government has to be present in Fiji’s rural and small island communities and actively engage with them. People want a Government that responds to their needs and they want a Government that produces results – whether it’s a new road, clean water, reliable electricity, affordable education, or a new health clinic.

It’s not just about delivering services. It’s about unlocking the development potential of our rural and small island communities to enable ordinary people to benefit economically.

And today, I’m proud as your Prime Minister to be here to unlock the development potential of Rabi by officially opening this new jetty - a 3.1-million dollar project designed to transform the lives of all of you.

Fiji’s outer islands – such as Rabi and its neighbors, including Kioa – possess significant natural resources. There are many opportunities for forestry, fisheries, and agriculture, as well as for tourism.

But until now, the problem has been access. These islands have been too isolated for that potential to be unleashed and they haven’t had the necessary infrastructure. Subsistence agriculture is the mainstay of their economies. What income people do earn is mainly generated from cash sales of copra, kava and fish - the same items that make up most of the trade with other islands.

This new jetty will help open up this remote area of Fiji. It will – for the first time – provide an adequate loading and unloading facility that will cut down on transportation costs; reduce the time it takes to handle cargo; increase the frequency of shipping services; and, make travel to and from Rabi much more convenient.

All this means new opportunities for commerce and enterprise.

Products grown, caught or created here can now more easily be brought to market elsewhere in the country. And goods from elsewhere can more easily be brought here.

There is also a much better opportunity for Rabi to tap into Fiji’s lucrative tourism market.

My fellow Fijians, this is a major development project in one of the remotest parts of Fiji, and I believe this investment will bring huge benefits to the Fijians of Rabi and surrounding islands.

I hope you use this opportunity to further develop the local economy and bring yourselves closer to your fellow Fijians and the rest of the world.

With those few words, it is now my pleasure to declare the new Rabi Jetty open.

Thank you. Vinaka vakalevu.

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