



Honourable 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 TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF FIJI -  
ARYA SAMAJ CAMPUS, VANUA LEVU**

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Fiji Technical College, Arya Samaj Campus  
VANUA LEVU

Tues. 7 April, 2015  
1500 Hours

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**The Minister for Education,**

**Representatives of the Vanua,**

**The Principal and Staff of the Vanua Levu Arya Samaj  
Campus of the Technical College of Fiji,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Students of the College,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Bula vinaka and a very good afternoon to you all.

I always say that our education revolution is my  
Government's proudest achievement. So I'm delighted

to be here in the North today to celebrate another milestone for our nation, for Vanua Levu and for Labasa - the opening of the Arya Samaj Campus of the Technical College of Fiji.

Two weeks ago, I opened the TCF campus in Nadi. Today I formally launch the campus in Labasa. And with the other existing campus in Suva, these are just the first of ten across Fiji that we intend to open before the beginning of next year to boost the training of our young people in the trade skills we need to build our nation and enable us to reach our full potential.

I'm especially thrilled to be opening this facility in the North, which has a special place in my heart and which my Government regards with the utmost importance.

We are determined to develop the North and end the decades of neglect by previous Governments. And to

provide the people of the North with the services they deserve and which we intend to deliver. Whether it is better access to education, healthcare, electricity, water, better roads or better telecommunications, the FijiFirst Government is intent on giving the people of the North the same level of services as anyone on Viti Levu.

And over time, we are determined to do whatever is necessary to enable the North to achieve its full potential. To give its people not only better services but every reason for them and their children to stay in the North and develop this wonderful part of Fiji for themselves and for future generations.

A key pillar of that better future is education and training. So I'm especially delighted that we now have this specialist Technical College in Labasa to increase the skills of the young people of the North and the skills base of the entire region.

As you all know, we have provided free schooling at Primary and Secondary School level plus scholarships and student loans for higher education. But until now, we have lacked the facilities to provide students with enough opportunities to gain qualifications in the trades.

Whether it is to become electricians, plumbers, mechanics, carpenters, welders and all those other things any nation or any region needs to create a viable future.

Today, we begin filling a glaring need – especially in the North - for more opportunities for students to gain Level Two Certificate qualifications in the various trades. To date, we've had basic skills opportunities at one end in private colleges and advanced skills opportunities at the other at the Fiji National University.

But we needed much broader access in the middle to Level Two technical qualifications than we've had in the past. And with these campuses around the country, we are finally be able to provide those opportunities.

We are raising the standards of our tradesmen and women throughout Fiji by giving them better access to formal qualifications- all under the umbrella of the Technical College of Fiji.

And for all of you here in Labasa, there's an added bonus in that you will no longer have to go to Suva to get access to Level Two Certificates in the various trades.

We are keeping you at home where you belong. Close to your families and friends. And we are keeping you in Vanua Levu where you belong and where you are needed to help to continue to build the local economy.

We are going to need more qualified and certified plumbers, electricians, carpenters and more of every trade discipline as the economy improves and the opportunities in the North expand.

So this is a vital capacity building exercise in the North as well as an unprecedented opportunity for our young people to achieve viable and sustainable livings and happy and worthwhile lives. All without having to leave the North.

As I also told our young people in Nadi two weeks ago, I want to fire your imaginations about what is possible for your own self-fulfilment if you take advantage of the opportunities the FijiFirst Government is giving you.

We will always need those professionals who gain qualifications in our universities to become teachers, doctors, lawyers and the other tertiary disciplines. But

building an army of skilled tradespeople is just as important for our national development.

To parents I say: don't just encourage your child to only become a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer. If they show any aptitude or interest in a trade, encourage them to take that path. No job, no profession is any less than the other.

We need builders and carpenters as much as we need members of the traditional professions. We are already experiencing a shortage of tradespeople and this shortage will hold our economy back if we don't act now to fill that shortage.

My Fellow Fijians,

Through these doors in Labasa will come many of the tradespeople of the future.

You may be training to be fitters or machinists. You may be training to be block layers or plasterers,

mechanics, panel-beaters, painters, welders, electrical tradespeople, hospitality or office workers.

But whatever course you do, you will all be vital cogs in the national wheel moving Fiji forward – vital members of Team Fiji - and I wish you all the very best.

I also urge members of the wider community to consider taking up the short courses that will also be available here in the evenings or on weekends because these are providing basic skills that will improve your chances of also getting a satisfying and well-paying job.

In all of this, anybody wanting to do a short course will have their fees paid for the Government as provided by the Budget. And those wishing to do the one year courses can have their fees paid under the TELS Program, which means my Government can give



you a loan to help pay your fees which you only pay back in instalments once you have started working.

So my fellow Fijians, these are great days in which every Fijian has more opportunity to embark on a lifetime of learning and acquire more skills.

It is certainly a great day for Labasa and the North as we open up this new avenue of learning. And I now have great pleasure to formally launch the Arya Samaj Campus of the Technical College of Fiji here in Vanua Levu.

Vinaka vakalevu, thank you.