



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

Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry

SPEECH AT THE OFFICIAL H/OVER OF LEASE DOCUMENTS TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE RAIWAI YOUTH AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Raiwai Youth Community Centre
RAIWAI

Thurs. 30th April, 2015
1000 Hours

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment;
The Acting CEO of the Housing Authority;
The Trustees of the Raiwai Youth and Community Council;
My Fellow Fijians.

I'm delighted to be here this morning, so soon after my 61st birthday to revisit a place I have very fond memories of as a boy growing up in Suva five decades ago.

Like many young people at the time, I used to come here to take part in a range of sporting activities or just to cheer for our club in our weekly competitions.

The Raiwai Youth and Community Centre will always have a special place in my heart. So I'm especially delighted to be here this morning to officially hand-over the Lease Documents for the land on which it sits to the Trustees of this wonderful place.

The Youth and Community Council here now has proper Title to the land, which will enable you to get ready access to development assistance that was a challenge before. The Council is receiving a block of 4,399 square metres free of charge from the Housing Authority. It has a market value of **\$450,000 dollars** and there are 52 years of the lease remaining.

So for another five decades, the Centre has security of title to continue to be a focal point for the residents of Raiwai and the youth and social clubs that thrive here.

My fellow Fijians, I'm also committed to assisting you to restore this Centre. To make the necessary improvements

to cement its role in the lives of the young people in this community.

We now have a new Board of Trustees who are fired with enthusiasm for the restoration project. And I urge you all – the different clubs, residents and friends – to work hand in hand with the Board and with Government to make this place the star attraction for the community we all know it can again be.

As I stand before you today, a flood of memories washes over me of the great times everyone who has been involved with this place has experienced. And the great names in sport who have been nurtured here and were instilled with the love of the games in which they excelled.

People such as Elesi Ketedromo; Alavina Waqa; Metuisela Motu; and Taitusi Naiduki, who became national reps for Volleyball and used to train here. And the big names in basketball - Seini Dobui; Saula Koroi; Mareta Tamani; Mili Talei; and Peni Ratumaiyale, to name but a few.

There are legions of young people here looking for similar opportunities. And we intend to provide them as we work together to build our sense of community in Raiwai.

There's nothing that gives me more pleasure as Prime Minister than to deliver to ordinary Fijians – no matter who they are or where they come from – the things they need like this facility to get the most out of life. You will have heard me say many times before: my Government's role is to deliver and to serve. So I have to say that I get very disappointed when we are accused as a Government of disadvantaging ordinary people and in particular the iTaukei.

We've just had a delegation of our political opponents telling the United Nations in New York that we are working against the interests of the iTaukei and dispossessing them, robbing them of their land and their rights.

It is a complete lie. An outrageous lie. Because the truth is that the iTaukei are now stronger under my Government than they have ever been. Their ownership of their land – around 91 per cent of Fiji - is guaranteed under our Constitution. Their culture and traditions are also protected. And they enjoy a range of rights that they have never had before – including the right to education and the free schooling this Government is providing and which previous governments these people supported were never able to provide.

The Constitution also guarantees the right to economic participation and a just minimum wage. Plus such things as access to transportation, sanitation, adequate food and water, social security, health and the right to live in a clean environment.

None of these things were guaranteed before. So not only is iTaukei land protected and landowners entitled to a fair share of royalties from minerals discovered on their land, but every iTaukei now has rights guaranteed in law that

never existed when these people exercised the power they did.

Under my Government, the iTaukei are more secure, have more opportunities and we are providing a host of Government services, also for the first time. Better roads, better housing, better medical facilities, free medicine, free water, the list of what we have delivered goes on.

Don't take my word for it. Look at the evidence. And when you do, you will know that these opposition figures are merely trying to deceive you for their own political ends.

What a strange little group this delegation to the UN presented. Its members have nothing in common except a hatred for me and this Government. Because we removed their privileges and the spoils of office they had come to expect. When we gave ordinary people the fair share of the national cake they deserve and the justice and fairness they have a right to expect.

Incredibly, one of the members of this delegation was the son of the former Labour Prime Minister who was beaten and held with his father in the Parliamentary complex in 2000 by the very same forces he now calls his friends.

There was a picture of this person in the newspaper with an iTaukei chief, now resident in America, who once called people like him *weeds* and said they had no place in Fiji.

Talk about strange bedfellows. These people were bitter enemies fifteen years ago. Yet now they are all back-slapping each other and would have you believe that they represent your best interests.

Examine the evidence and you will see for yourselves how ridiculous this alliance is. It merely proves the truth of a very old saying. That my enemy's enemy is my friend. And see for yourself how ridiculous the claims they are making are – false claims that are not supported by any evidence whatsoever.

My fellow Fijians, do not allow yourselves to be misled. What these people really hate is that their perks are gone and the Fijian people have turned against them.

We are now one nation, one Fiji with opportunity and justice for all. Ethnicity, religion, provinces, chiefs, commoners should not matter. We are one. It is only by working together as one nation that Fiji will ever achieve the greatness that we all know is within our reach if we can stay united and strong.

I honestly believe what I say when I tell our young people that there has never been a better time to be Fijian. And all of the evidence supports me in that belief – an economy growing by more than four per cent a year and offering us all the prospect of more prosperity for everyone.

Just as we have empowered this Community Centre by giving you title to the land you gather on, we are empowering every Fijian. We are giving children who once couldn't go to school a chance to do so. We are giving the under-privileged a helping hand with free medicine and water and better access to housing and to health.

And we are also empowering our women by giving them more opportunities to take part in the economy and - as I have said this week - to be free of the intimidation and fear that domestic violence has inflicted on far too many Fijian families.

My fellow Fijians, the effort to revive this place is also a sign of great days ahead. It will strengthen our sense of community in Raiwai and our sense of nationhood in Fiji – the unique pride in being Fijian and a citizen of one of the best countries in the world.

To our young people I say: seize the opportunities that you have been given, whether it is the free education my Government is now offering you or access to a facility like this.

Great days lie ahead for Fiji and for Raiwai. And I now have the pleasure to formally hand-over the Lease Documents for this land to the Trustees of the Raiwai Youth and Community Council.

Vinaka vakalevu, thank you.
