

**Commodore J.V. Bainimarama, CF(Mil), OSt.J, MSD, jssc, psc**

**Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, Public Service, Peoples Charter for Change and Progress, Information, iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Lands and Mineral Resources**

**SPEECH AT THE MOB END OF YEAR EVENT**

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**Farmers Club Sat. 7th Dec., 2013**

**NADI 1830 Hours**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

**Ni sa bula Vinaka.**

**When asked to come and speak at this Marist Old Boys Association end of the year event, in Nadi, I was particularly pleased to learn that the underlying focus as put together by the MOB Association Fiji and their Alumni chapter in Nadi was to commence on a partnership with the school (Marist Brother’s High School) in introducing a sports development structure that is vital to the holistic development of the young men of Kaunikuila, fostering their physical, social and emotional health.**

**I was informed by the Marist Old Boys Association, Nadi Chapter that the main purpose of this event is** to raise appropriate funding to launch and introduce in the School in 2014, a rugby sports development structure, professionally designed to produce a better outcome for young men who wish to pursue sports as a career in life.

The intention of such a program, as I understand it, is to also ensure that it contributes towards personal development of the students, focusing in the areas of character building, self-discipline, personal & team responsibilities and learning to apply them in life.

These values, as I see it, are just as important in the area of academia as it is in sports.

It has been quoted many times by experts worldwide that t**he benefits of sport, reach beyond the impact on physical well-being and the value of the educational benefits of sport should not be under-estimated.**

**In my capacity as Prime Minister, I am pleased to be associated with ground-level community initiatives focused on impacting the lives of our young people – the future of this nation.**

**This has been a fundamental focus of my government right from the start.**

**I have constantly promoted the idea to communities, be it Social clubs, Church groups, NGOs and Alumni groups (as in the case, tonight) to take on initiatives and to pursue efforts that help contribute to the development of our own people and for one another.**

**I mentioned at the Opening of the ANZ Stadium in Suva earlier, in the year, that n**othing is more important to my Government than the fitness and well-being of our people. Whether it is through the building of new integrated sporting centres throughout the country, or through individual or organised initiatives such as these.

Nothing pleases me and my Government more than to see the people of Fiji take on personal responsibility in these ways.

**My Government is fully aware that d**espite recognition of the positive impact, sport has on education and child development, physical education has been increasingly challenged within education systems across Fiji, in past years.

These challenges have seen a decrease in the amount of time allocated to physical education, the number of trained staff, the amount of training provided for physical education teachers, and spending on resources required to deliver physical education in schools.

In my recent visits around the country, I have stated that “*any nation that is willing to invest almost a fifth of its national budget in education is a nation that takes education seriously”*. However in saying that, it is also the desire of my government that a greater show of personal responsibility is taken on by the citizens of our nation to also do their part as well in ensuring that education in all its forms is a priority and is taken seriously by all.

I want to specially thank, the Main Corporate Sponsors such as Digicel and Namotu Island Resort and the many other associate sponsors and business houses who have come in support of this noble initiative undertaken by the MOB Alumni.

I also want to pay homage to community supporters, and the old boys and their families - those of you who have bought a ticket to support tonight’s event. Allow me to remind us all that your $50 contribution is a wonderful investment in the lives of 600 young students of Kaunikuila.

What better way to celebrate the Spirit of Christmas by choosing to give towards a worthy cause this evening.

Finally and something more a personal note – I would like to take this opportunity (on behalf of Mary and I) to wish you all a very Merry Christmas & and let us all look forward to a very prosperous year in 2014.

To the Old Boys...May the Red Fire spirit prevail in all that you pursue in the new year!!

Thank you and vinaka vakalevu.

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