

**Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama,**

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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

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Signing of the Memorandum Of Understanding between the Ba Chamber of Commerce and the Fijian Government Regarding the Construction of New Ba Hospital

Ba Town Council Hall, Friday 4th October, 2013

**BA** 1500 Hours

* ***Cabinet Ministers,;***
* ***President of Ba Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Mr Dinesh Patel;***
* ***Special Administrator Ba, Lautoka & Tavua, Mr Pravin Bala;***
* ***Chairlady of Ba Hospital Board of Visitors, Ms Anita Narayan;***
* ***Members of Ba Business Community.***

Bula Vinaka and good afternoon.

It’s a great pleasure to be here to celebrate the signing of a landmark Memorandum of Understanding, sealing the public-private partnership for the construction of a brand-new hospital for Fijians living in and around Ba.

Today, with this MOU, Government has joined forces with the Ba Chamber of Commerce, marking the first step of an ambitious capital project that has the potential to benefit close to 90,000 people.

I would like to thank the Ba Chamber of Commerce for their leadership and initiative. It is thanks in large part to their hard work and bold vision that we are here today.

I often discuss the importance of public-private partnerships in delivering quality, efficiency and transparency to the Fijian people and today’s MOU is a perfect example of this.

The Ba Chamber of Commerce has provided a detailed plan for the different phases of construction and will play a key role in partnering with Government to ensure the successful completion of this project by providing their project management skills.

They have undertaken to line up the architects and engineers, negotiate with contractors in a competitive bidding process, and source as many Fijian-made materials and materials not available locally at competitive and preferably discounted pricing!!! As Project Managers, they will offer a top level of expertise in overseeing the project from beginning to end, increasing efficiency, saving costs and delivering a superior facility to the people of Ba.

Ba is leading the way for other Chambers of Commerce and non-governmental organisations. My Government is always looking for opportunities to form productive partnerships with communities and NGOs to improve the lives of all Fijians. Today’s MOU has provided an example for such co-operation, which we hope others will follow.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Under Fiji’s new Constitution, every Fijian has the right to health. This means that any Government must do all within its available resources to provide health care services and health care facilities that promote and protect good health.

The new Ba Hospital will be such a facility and it’s long overdue. You all know the state of the old hospital. It’s 87 years-old and shows the signs of its age. The building is run down and at this point beyond repair. We’re not interested in any more Band-Aid solutions. It’s time for us to move forward with the new project.

Construction of the new hospital will be completed in stages, with a total project cost of more than **$23 million**. Government will fund the first phase of construction with an allocation of **$7.3 million** in 2014.

Working with the Ba Chamber of Commerce, we hope to have all the plans finalised in the next couple of months for construction to begin in January next year. I have informed the Government officials to fast track this process.

Today’s MOU signing marks the first of what will be many milestones to look forward to for this project.

With those few words, ladies and gentlemen, I wish this project all success and speedy completion.

Vinaka Vakalevu. Thank you.

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