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**Rear Admiral 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**

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**SPEECH FOR THE ROYALTY PAYMENT TO THE MATAQALI MATANIKOROVATU**

**Kalabu Wed. 9th July,.2014**

**NAITASIRI 12 Noon**

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**The head of the vanua vakaturaga o Kalabu,**

**The Church Minister,**

**Members of the Mataqali o Matanikorovatu, in Kalabu,**

**Naitasiri**.

Bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all,

I’m delighted to be here in Naitasiri again this morning for a very happy event for the people of Kalabu – the handing over of a cheque for $1.6 million to a total of 74 members of the Mataqali.

This represents the long outstanding and all due royalty payments for the Laqere Government Quarry – commonly known as the Nasinu Quarry which began in 1931.

We are here today to correct the mistakes and neglect of past Governments of depriving you of royalty payments.

My Government – unlike others - is determined to be fair and just to all Fijians including giving owners of the land proper royalties for minerals and materials extracted from their land. Indeed, this is now incorporated in our Constitution.

It is no longer something that is optional. It is no longer a gift. It is an absolute right. And I can promise you that nothing like this – what happened here in Kalabu – will ever happen again.

Moreover, this $1.6 million is being distributed equally. You are all getting your share, whether you are old or young. It even includes children registered in the Vola Ni Kawa Bula.

 It is fair and it is equitable. And I hope you use this money wisely to improve your lives and those of your family. It is a wonderful opportunity and I urge you all to seize it.

You have all made a wonderful contribution to the nation by allowing this quarry to provide material for our roads, to benefit not only yourselves but every Fijian. And the nation thanks you for that contribution.

Today demonstrates the truth of what I have been saying all over Fiji. That native land is absolutely safe. And even if it’s used for some purpose, the owners get compensated. And if it is no longer required for the public purpose it gets returned to the landowners. This is guaranteed under our Constitution.

I want to warmly thank you all for your wonderful reception. And I want to thank the Fiji Roads Authority for all the work it has done to resolve this long standing issue, that it inherited from the old Department of National Roads. I don’t need to tell you that the old organisation was beset with inefficiency, mismanagement and corruption.

I’m pleased to say that those days are over and the FRA is righting the wrongs of the past.

I also want to commend the FRA for the work it is supervising all over Fiji to improve our roads, which are the lifelines of our economy. We are improving this infrastructure with the biggest investment in roads in our country’s history.

As I keep saying, It’s not going to happen overnight, especially considering the poor state of some of our roads that we inherited but the job has begun and people over the country are seeing the results of that work every day.

The Government will not rest until these improvements are completed and we have the road system we need to expand the economy, attract investment, create jobs and improve the lives of every Fijian.

 With those words, I have great pleasure in handing over this long overdue cheque to the Mataqali for the $1.6 million.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

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