

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

**Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry**

**SPEECH AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE BRITISH LEGION COMMUNITY WELFARE CENTRE**

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**Quarters 7 Mon. 10Nov, 2014**

**DOMAIN 10.00 Hours**

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**Your Excellency, the British High Commissioner,**

**Members of the armed forces of Fiji and the United Kingdom,**

**Ex-Servicemen and Women and their Families,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**.

Bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

I’m delighted to be here today to officially open the Royal British Legion Community Welfare Centre.

I’m equally pleased that my Government has been able to support this project, including providing the buildings and land for the facility.

The Centre is for the benefit of personnel and families of Fijians currently serving – or who have served - in the British Armed Forces.   It will be run by the Royal British Legion (Fiji Branch), which helps servicemen and women and their families who have fallen on difficult times.

The Centre will also provide a focal point for the work of the Legion and help provide assistance to those who need it most.

I fully support their valuable work, and I’m sure that the Legion will continue to thrive in its new home.  I was especially pleased to hear that the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, has taken a personal interest in the Centre and its success. We look forward to continued support from the British Government.

There are currently around 1,800 Fijian soldiers serving with various British corps and regiments and I know that their contribution is highly valued.

As we all know, some Fijians serving Britain have paid the ultimate sacrifice in defending the values we all share and for that, they will never be forgotten. I want to say as Prime Minister how much we value the work being done by all those involved to assist the families and communities of the fallen. Vinaka vakalevu.

Tomorrow marks Remembrance Day and, as always, we will gather all over Fiji to remember our fallen servicemen and women. We must never allow our young people to forget the sacrifice they made to ensure our freedom.

I urge every Fijian to try to attend a Remembrance Day service or parade tomorrow. And even if you can’t, to at least pause at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month to remember our brave heroes in all theatres of conflict.

For me - as it is for every soldier, sailor or airman -it is one of the most solemn days of the year and one of the most emotional. So I ask the nation to wear a poppy tomorrow and reflect on the fact that these men and women died defending our values so that we might live the lives we live today. We pray that they continue to Rest in Peace in the loving arms of Almighty God.

Of course, we also embrace their loved ones, determined to do what we can to console them in their loss. And we also re-dedicate ourselves to the care and welfare of all servicemen and women – now and into the future.

On the eve of Remembrance Day 2014, we gather to launch this Centre to assist those Fijians who have served in the British armed forces. It’s a time to celebrate their commitment to our shared values.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, with those few words, it is my honour to open the Royal British Legion Community Welfare Centre and to wish it every success.

Vinaka vakalevu.  Thank you.

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