

**COMMODORE JOSAIA VOREQE BAINIMARAMA, CF (Mil), OStJ, MSD, jssc, psc**

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

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**COMMISSIONING OF FEA GRID EXTENTION IN NAVOSA, UNVEILING OF ADRA COLLECTION CENTRE SIGNBOARD AND LAUNCHING OF THE FNU COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE PROGRAM FOR NAVOSA**

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**Keiyasi, NAVOSA 1200 Hours**

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**Distinguished Guests;**

**Members of Cabinet;**

**Government Officials;**

**Students and Community of Navosa.**

Cola vina and a very good morning to you all.

It gives me great pleasure to officiate at the commissioning of the FEA Grid Extension from Vatubalavu to Keiyasi.

One of the cornerstones of my Government’s development program has been to bring electricity to those areas of Fiji reliant on generators or kerosene power.

It is something that has been neglected by previous governments and far too many people still don’t have access to grid power.

But we are steadily improving that access – just as we are bringing clean water and better roads to many areas of the country to improve the lives of our people.

Because of the absence of these in Navosa, I am well aware of the challenges faced by either Government Officials stationed at Vatumali or the communities who live and work in Keiyasi.

So I’m delighted that the days without power are finally over –that the electricity supply has finally reached the interior of Navosa, one of the remotest parts of Fiji.

It will revolutionise the lives of people living here - from the use of domestic appliances in the home, power tools in the workplace to our students being able to study better at night.

I am also here today to launch the Commercial Agriculture Program taught by the Fiji National University and to Inaugurate the Packing Centre funded by New Zealand AID and the Adventist Development Relief Agency.

As someone who has often visited Navosa, I’m delighted to have witnessed personally the changes in the areas of education, business, agriculture and rural development.

We have seen the upgrading of roads up to Nawaicoba, the commencement of work on the Vatumali Hospital and the development of education  facilities in Navosa.

Now that Vatumali and the two villages of Keiyasi can access electricity, my Government intends to extend it further into the interior through the partnership between the FEA and the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management.

I urge you all to make the most of this advance and the opportunities it provides to improve the quality of your lives.

In the case of the Commercial Agriculture Program, this is part of my Government’s determination to empower our young people and provide them with sustainable economic futures.

We are opening up opportunities for young farmers to enter the agricultural sector by providing them with the skills they need not only for themselves but Fiji as a whole.

We have a vision that Fiji can be self-sustainable in food production. Why are we importing so much food when we have such fertile land to grow things on? I want our young people to be part of a national movement that prizes Agriculture as a career. I want our young farmers to gain the ability to feed themselves, the nation and eventually establish Fiji as a valuable food exporter.

Through the FNU, selected young people are being chosen to undertake a tertiary course to learn the latest farming skills. We are also equipping them with an allocation of land and machinery to give them a head start. After that, it is up to them but we are pinning our hopes on them taking up the challenge to make Fiji a major food producer.

Fresh food also requires good handling. So our commercial farming initiative is closely linked to the launch of a Packing Shed here funded by New Zealand AID and the Adventist Development Relief Agency. This shed will ensure that your produce gets to market in a fresher and better state and you get the maximum price possible for it.

So to our partners – FNU, NZ AID and ADRA – I extend the Government’s thanks for joining hands with us to improve the lives of our citizens here.

My fellow Fijians, I want to say a few words about the events that will unfold in the coming weeks and months as we move towards the general election in September 2014.

At the end of next month we will be unveiling our new Constitution, which guarantees political, economic and social rights for every Fijian for the first time.

It is a shame some politicians have spread lies about the draft Constitution. They’ve been trying to persuade ordinary people that their rights and land ownership are no longer safe.

I am here to tell you today that this is not the case and that these people will be exposed as liars when the final Constitution is unveiled.

For the first time, we are guaranteeing such things as the right to clean water, the right to adequate food and the right for everyone to make a living. And of course - as we have promised - every Fijian will have the same chance for the first time to get on in life through the equal opportunity provisions that are at the heart of our Constitution.

Also for the first time, the new Constitution is being translated into the iTaukei language and Fiji Hindi. I urge you all to try to obtain a copy and read it for yourself. If you can’t read, get somebody to read it to you. You will soon realise that it is a good document – despite what the critics say - that will take Fiji forward as One Nation and provide our children and grandchildren with a much better future than they could ever have expected from the past.

Here today, we see some of the most important elements of my Government’s vision for the new Fiji coming together in this remote part of the country.

We are switching on the power as part of our slogan – We Deliver. We are delivering basic services to ordinary Fijians that in turn, empower them and give them the tools they need to improve their lives.

We are training our young people to give them sustainable futures in agriculture, not only for themselves but to help feed our nation and free it from its dependence on imports.

And we see the fruits of the partnership we have forged with donors in the international community to fulfill our joint vision to improve the lives of every Fijian.

So, My fellow Fijians, I congratulate the FEA for completing phase one in the extension of the FEA Grid.

I congratulate FNU for extending the Commercial Agriculture Program to the interior of Navosa.

And I congratulate our aid partners and thank them for their assistance.

We are confident that Navosa and its people will prosper in the years ahead in the new and better Fiji.

 Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

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