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

SPEECH AT THE COMMISSIONING OF THE NAKAVIKA GROUND-WATER PROJECT

Nakavika Settlement
NADROGA

Thurs. 30 April, 2015
1400 Hours

The Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management;

The Director of Mineral Resources;

Representatives from the Fiji Electricity Authority;

Government Officials;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Cola Vina and a very good afternoon to you all.

It's wonderful to be in Nadroga again and with the people of Nakavika settlement in the glorious Sigatoka Valley. And especially to open an important project – one that will transform your lives by giving you reliable access to drinking water.

Today, I have the great pleasure to officially launch the Nakavika Groundwater Development Project, which will finally solve the problem you have all had in gaining proper access to water.

As you all know, this has been a challenging task because where we needed to drill had been drilled before and we needed to get around a number of complications. These challenges, as you also know, caused work on this project to be suspended for a time.

But I was determined as Prime Minister that these problems be solved to give you the water you need and deserve.

Today we celebrate the completion of a project that will mean a great deal to all of you – the thirteen households of 68 people who make up this settlement,

plus those in the nearby community of Nabaka, who will also be able to access this underground supply.

The water that we are extracting here isn't perfect and I want to stress to you all that it needs to be boiled before you drink it. But once you do boil it, it is safe. And most importantly, you need no longer worry as much about access to a dependable supply, especially during those long periods of drought.

It's also important to stick to the pumping restrictions that have been imposed to maintain a sustainable flow. And it is critical to maintain access to any other water available to you – especially rainwater. Because the supply we are getting from the ground is not unlimited and we need to manage that reserve in a responsible and sustainable manner.

I want to thank everyone involved in the complex task we faced here to finally turning on the tap. And above all, I want to thank the hardworking people of

Nakavika, who committed themselves wholeheartedly to assisting the Government with this project.

As Prime Minister, I recognise the struggle you face as commercial farmers to make ends meet and the challenges you already face in getting a return for your produce. And I'm very pleased that we have been able to provide you with this vital resource to improve your lives. "*Vina valevu*" for your patience as we worked around the problems and finally found a solution.

All over Fiji, my Government is working as hard as it can to deliver the basic services that the Fijian people deserve and that we are determined to give them. As Prime Minister, I will not rest until every Fijian - no matter who they are or where they live - has access to clean water, to electricity, decent roads, better education, better health facilities, better telecommunications and all of those things our citizens

should have as we build a modern nation worthy of who we are.

It is obviously going to take time to provide every Fijian with all the things we would like to give them. But if you look at what we have been able to achieve already, we have an impressive record of service and I think everyone can be confident that we will eventually achieve our ambition.

As I constantly say, our mission as a Government is to deliver and to serve. This is how I want to be judged above all else – that we have done everything possible to provide ordinary Fijians with the things they need and the things they deserve.

You will hear from my political opponents that Fijians and especially the iTaukei – are being disadvantaged under this Government. What rubbish.

These are people who were given the opportunity to deliver the same level of services when they were in office but failed the test. Yet they now have the temerity to point the finger at me and my Government.

As I've said before, don't take my word for it. You can all see things clearly for yourselves.

- Who has provided your children with free schooling and the best possible chance any young Fijian has ever had to get a higher education – to go to a university or technical college and fulfil their dreams and those of their families? We have.

- Who has united our country as never before? Ended the years of division and argument and set us up for the future we deserve – one nation, one people with opportunity and prosperity for all? We have.

- Who has given the people of Nadroga and this Valley better roads and made it easier for you to get your produce to the market, your children to school or your sick to the hospital? We have.

- Who has made the Fijian economy stronger, growing at more than four per cent, with all that means for the creation of jobs and the creation of more wealth for as many people as possible? We have.

- And who has made Fiji stronger and more independent, a respected voice in the world, whose Peacekeepers defend vulnerable people in troubled spots far from our shores and do so bravely and proudly? We have.

My Fellow Fijians,

I call on you all here in Nakavika and throughout Nadroga to turn your backs to the message of division being spread by our political opponents. It is simply a

lie for those members of SODELPA to say the iTaukei are disadvantaged.

Because the truth is the iTaukei have never been stronger. Their ownership of their land is guaranteed in our Constitution. iTaukei children are being given opportunities to be educated and get well-paid jobs that their parents and grandparents could only dream of. iTaukei traditions and culture remain and are valued by every Fijian.

I'm also extremely disappointed by the attitude of SODELPA's partner in Opposition – the National Federation Party. What on earth do these people stand for? Whose interests do they represent?

They stand side by side with SODELPA as its members continually undermine our vision of One Nation, seemingly willing to accept SODELPA's elitist agenda. Why do they remain silent when SODELPA preaches its message of division and hate?

Why doesn't Biman Prasad – the NFP Leader – tackle his opposition partners about their obsession with ethnicity and privileged position of some over other Fijians.

Sadly, he doesn't seem to have the courage to do so. And that is a great shame.

My Fellow Fijians,

Only my *FijiFirst* movement has a vision of every Fijian joining hands to take our beloved nation forward, to enable us all to have better and more fulfilling lives.

As one nation, we have never been stronger or more proud. And as one nation, we are working to make Fiji even greater, even more respected in the world.

My fellow Fijians, in this small settlement today, something wonderful is happening in the lives of a few – better access to water, the most basic staple of life.

And in our nation as a whole, wonderful things are happening every day for everyone.

I urge you all to remain united and focused on the truth. Unlike my political opponents, I don't tell lies or try to exploit people's fears. I fundamentally believe in the decency and good sense of the Fijian people and trust their ability to make up their own minds, to examine the facts for themselves.

To all of you, "*vina valevu*" for your wonderful welcome. It is a great day for me and, of course, an even greater day for you as we turn on the taps. And I now have great pleasure to officially launch the Nakavika Settlement Groundwater Project.

Vina valevu again, thank you.
