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

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## **SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW BUILDING BLOCK AT THE NASINU MUSLIM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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Nasinu Muslim Primary School  
NAKASI

Wed. 15 April, 2015  
1000 Hours

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**The Minister for Education,**

**The President of the Fiji Muslim League and Officials,**

**Representatives of the Islamic Development Bank,**

**Representatives of the Nasinu Branch of the FML,**

**The School Management Committee,**

**The Head Teacher and Staff,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Boys and Girls,**

Bula vinaka, As-salaam-wa-alaikum and a very good morning to you all.

I'm delighted to be here this morning to open this magnificent addition to the Nasinu Muslim Primary School - a new eight-classroom block to provide a better learning environment for the children at this wonderful institution.

For anyone who doubts that the future of education in Fiji is one of students of every background coming together as one, I would like them to come to this school.

It is a shining example of what has been made possible in the new Fiji. And it is also a shining example of the great partnership that has been forged between faith-based organisations and Government to benefit Fijian children and give them the best possible start in life.

I have to say that whatever certain politicians think, I have yet to meet a single young Fijian who doesn't believe that the future of our nation is one of unity. Because our young people know more than anyone that only by working

together as one team can our beloved Fiji ever reach its full potential.

I am also convinced that ordinary people are not as consumed with our ethnic differences as some of the politicians who claim to represent their interests.

Yesterday, I listened to an i'Taukei radio program called "*Vakariba Malamala*" that was a talk-back discussion on the Government's plans to open up more boarding places in Government schools to students from rural and maritime areas.

The Opposition has chosen to cast this initiative as a threat to the i'Taukei culture and way of life. But not once in the hour-long talk-back discussion did anyone mention ethnicity. And every speaker supported the Government's position.

I wish the Leader of Opposition had been listening to this program, just as I wish she'd listen a lot more to the indigenous grassroots like I do on a whole range of issues. Because she would soon realise that her own narrow-minded and bigoted views are not shared by the vast majority of i'Taukei, who want a fair go for every Fijian.

My Fellow Fijians,

I am always inspired when I visit the nation's primary schools and see the shining faces of our children - the future of our nation and on whom our hopes to build a better nation depend.

Working with organisations like the Fiji Muslim League, my Government's first priority above all others is to improve educational opportunities for our children. Both for their fulfilment and to fulfil our vision of Fiji becoming a clever country in which everyone can share in a prosperous and happy future.

Today I want to thank the Muslim League and the Islamic Development Bank for their generosity in providing this investment of **\$670,000** towards the futures of our children in Nasinu.

Fiji's Muslims may be relatively few in number - around 4.5 per cent of the population - but they are at the forefront of our education revolution.

And it is wonderful to see so many children of different faiths benefiting from the opportunities the Muslim community is providing to improve the education and improve the lives of everyone.

At a time when certain others in public life seem more concerned with attacking our concept of one nation - with justice and fairness for all - schools like this are holding up a lantern of inclusiveness and hope. They are beacons of unity, of Fijians working together as one people for the

benefit of everyone, no matter who we are or where we come from.

I pledge before you all today that as Prime Minister I will never yield to the forces of division, those among us more concerned with the privileges of the elite than the advancement of ordinary Fijians. And I am sure that the overwhelming majority of Fijians stand beside me.

My fellow Fijians,

This school has come a long way from its humble beginnings when it was opened back in 1959 - 56 years ago. Back then, it had just four classrooms housed in a building with a corrugated iron roof, bamboo thatched walls and a wooden floor.

There was only one tap to supply water to the entire school, which had a roll of 91 students. There were 47 boys and 44 girls. So we know that even five decades ago, the Muslim community in Fiji was giving equal opportunity

of education to boys and girls and that tradition continues to this day.

It's wonderful to see how much things have changed over those five decades – both for the school and the surrounding area from which it draws its students.

Nasinu then was little more than a settlement – a staging post on the road from Suva to Nausori best known for its teachers college.

Now, it's the most populated corridor in Fiji - housing 40 per cent of all Fijians. And it's a proud, thriving, multi-cultural community with tens of thousands of residents and tens of thousands of young people looking for opportunity.

I want to pay tribute to this school for the role it has played in the development of this area and of our young people – the tens of thousands who've attended classes

here over the years and owe their place in life to what they learnt at Nasinu Muslim Primary School.

The School has changed a great deal over the years but not its central mission – to be a place of learning and spiritual and cultural enrichment for those who come here. Constantly evolving to meet the demands of the community of Nasinu and always making a tremendous contribution to the area and to Fiji.

Today, we thank God for the blessings he has showered on this School and those who've attended it over the years and we ask God's blessing on those who will use these classrooms in the years ahead.

To you boys and girls here, I want to repeat what I say all over Fiji: work as hard as you can to take advantage of the benefits this Government is giving you - free schooling both here and when you go to high school. And scholarships and student loans to encourage you to go on to university



or a technical college and learn the skills you need to get a well-paid, satisfying job.

To the Year One students in particular who are benefiting from our Free Milk and Free Weet-Bix Programme: drink up, eat up, and use this breakfast we are giving you every school day to grow big and strong and lay the foundation for a healthy life.

As I often say: Nothing gives me more pleasure as Prime Minister than to see the beaming faces of our young people in schools like this. To see the difference we are making in their lives and the lives of their families. Giving more Fijians than ever before genuine opportunities to improve their circumstances in partnership with faith-based organisations like your own.

So I wish every child here a healthy and happy time at school and healthy and happy lives. And also say a big

vinaka vakalevu to your parents and teachers for the sacrifices they are making on your behalf.

Thank you again for the wonderful welcome you have given me and I now have great pleasure in declaring these new classrooms at the Nasinu Muslim Primary School open.

Vinaka vakalevu, Thank you.

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