**HON PM BAINIMARAMA AT THE GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE NEW LAQERE MARKET**

**7/31/2017**

The Honourable Minister for Local Government, Environment, Housing, Infrastructure and Transport;
Management and Staff of Nasinu Town Council;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

I’m delighted to be here in Nasinu –the heart of our largest centre of population and one of the fastest growing areas in all of Fiji – as we break ground for the construction of the new Laqere Market.
The construction of this new market is part of my Government’s economic game plan for Fiji that has already carried us to a record eight straight years of economic growth – and that is projected to bring us ten consecutive years of growing the Fijian economy.

When we set out that game plan it wasn’t just for the few. No. Our work was, has been and will be to empower ordinary men and women. Those small businesses, sole traders at the grassroots level who had long been left out of our national development. Those who need to be given the opportunity to take themselves up to the next level.

When this new market is completed, it will serve as a modern and functional hub of economic activity in Nasinu. The market will include stalls for 500 vendors, along with ample room for more extensions and upgrades in the future. So as Nasinu continues on its rapid path of development, this market will be ready to support that growth and expand. It will ensure that we have proper facilities for those who sell their fruits and vegetables and other goods currently by the side of the road. It will ensure that these vendors and their customers have access to clean and modern amenities which is what a modern city and indeed a modern country should have and provide for, for all its citizens.

When my Government invests in the Fijian people through projects – just like this new market – we think very seriously about both the immediate impact and how a project will support future development. Because – thanks to sound management – our economy is only expected to keep doing well, and our communities, such as the one here in Nasinu are only expected to become more prosperous. So when we look at our development, we are considering the good we can create for our people today and for the generations that will follow.
That vision of leadership was – unfortunately – not shared by past Governments in Fiji, who far too often only chased short-sighted development. Of course many also say that even the current opposition parties don’t have that vision. As we’ve seen, that lack of vision and putting ordinary citizens at the centre of our development plans can place serious burdens on our nation-state.

My government on the contrary is fast investing in worthwhile development, laying a foundation for growth that takes into consideration the enormous potential of Fiji and all Fijians. And this new market will soon stand as a proud example of the progress that is being made.

This new market complex has been funded at 4.3 million dollars, making it the largest government funded project in the history of Nasinu Town. When it is complete, it will give our Fijians in Nasinu direct access to fresh, local and seasonal produce, provide Nasinu with an even stronger sense of community and serve as a foundation for the continued growth of your vibrant, urban economy. It will create employment opportunities and making shopping for produce lot more dignified and hygiene both for vendors and their customers.

This new market is only part of an entire package of investment and development that my Government has committed to bring to Nasinu in the year ahead. In our recent national budget, we’ve announced funding to develop the new Valelevu Stadium and construct a new children’s park. In addition, we’ve set aside one million dollars to begin work on a public swimming pool in the Nasinu municipality.

Of course, our vision to build a better Fiji includes every Fijian, from every walk of life and every corner of our country. And our upcoming budget also includes allocations for eight mini-markets at strategic locations throughout Fiji that will bring economic opportunities and provide improved services and convenience.

In total, we’ve set aside a record 19.4 million dollars for capital projects in our towns and cities across Fiji to improve the services, facilities and other amenities that support urban growth and development and modernisation. And, as our largest population centre, we expect Nasinu to lead the way and set an example of smart and sustainable urban development. To this end we will also be working with countries like Singapore and learning from their experience and expertise.

Ladies and gentlemen, the years of neglect and uneven development are well behind us. We are in a period of tremendous economic growth – and our small and medium-sized businesses are doing particularly well. So I urge all of our farmers, suppliers and vendors and their customers to take full advantage of the opportunity this market will create when it is finished.

I’d like to thank the project committee for their contribution and the Nasinu Town Council for working with my Government to make this project a reality.

With those few words, I would now like to officially break ground on the construction of this new market.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.