

OPENING ADDRESS

ROTUMA DAY CELEBRATIONS – THURSDAY 13th MAY, 2010

GOVERNMENT STATION AHAU, ROTUMA.

Gagaj 'Aitu Noa'ia.

Noa'ia Gagaj Sau ne 'Os 'Otmot te' Rotuma.

Gagaj Maraf, Gagaj Kausiriaf, Gagaj Markao, Gagaj Fikitu'a, Gagaj Tuiporot, Gagaj Mora', Gagaj Osias ma 'omus Haian Gagaj 'Atakoa.

Noa'ia Gagaj Puer ne Kautaunaiag Gagajta, Mr. Terterani Rigamoto ma te' ne 'aus Mata gagaj atakoa ne itu'u.

Noa'ia Gagaj Pure, District Officer/Rotuma, Mr. Nicholas Ting ma te' ne Gagaj mua'akte ne Matanitu.

Noa'ia Gagaj puer ne rako ma Gagaj fa ma haian re rako.

Uaua'ak tape'ma se Gagaj Fekau atakoa ne RogHegu ma Gagaj Fa Ha'a.

Noa'ia Gagaj Tok Tutu atakoa ne Hanua, Gagaj Fa ma Haina, Haharagi ma 'aus 'otomis la'riri'i ma ma'ma'piga.

'Aus Noa'ia 'e Mauri.

Gou a'hae ne nonoj la gou la uaua'ak mumua se hanis 'on Gagaj 'Aitu ne 'avohian la is la po la leum 'e teran teis la is la te 'agesea 'e Katoag 'ahelava teis, katoagat ne la 'afo'ou'akia se isa teranit ne 'os temamafua re puer hanis ma atmai, ma na 'os otmot teis Rotuma se Sau Hanta Vikatorie ma 'on Matanitu Ranranta 'e fau Tarau ma Ruaghul ma Siav (129yrs) ne 'of sin.

Gagaj atakoa te nonojot la gou la na tape'ma otou lio ne faksorot 'e reko haisiriag ne 'os amnaki ma te'et ne soko 'e reko kaulaoag Gagajat ne Matanitu ne nonoj la leum kat pora la leum la fakma se 'os pa ese me fu'ak te.

Aus la figalelei ma la rot'ak 'e reko Gagaja puer matanitu ta Commodore JV Bainimarama ma on kaugarueagta kat pora la leum 'e reko popot fak garue, ma tape'ma se Minista ne Hanua(Jaujia ma Pirisimene), Ratu Epeli Ganilau, Deputy Secretary/Director Rotuma Development Projects, Mr. Tomasi Tui ma Commissioner Eastern, Lieutenant Colonel Ifereimi Vasu ma 'oris kautaunai'agta tape'ma kop la la' la re tauna' mij 'e Kadavu 'e reko te ne lagha' ta mane'ak 'e kamatag ne fau te'. Kop ma la po ma iris 'e tae la leum fakmurimea 'e laloag ne faute'is.

Figalelei ma 'aus la rot'ak. Gou amus le' tere'at, ka igke'ia gou leum la aus la re katoag la ag'ia gou. Noa'ia ko gagaj 'e hanisi.

'E reko te teis ma gou 'ahae ne nonoj pau la gou la uaua'ak tape' ma se Gagaj Sau ne 'Otmote', Chairman ta ma gagaj ne kautaunaig Gagaj (Council of Rotuma) 'e reko 'ahae hanisit la gou tae la leum la is la te 'agesea 'e teran 'ati'ak ka pumue teis.

Noa'ia 'e hanisi ko gagaj, 'e reko is ma 'os kainag helav ma is 'e os katoag teis, ma gou faksor la figalelei ma 'aus la rot'ak ka gou la 'avahia otou faega 'e faeag fifista.

Gagaj 'Aitu la 'ahanis ma 'aalalum'ak os katoagteis ma gou far la figalelei ma is la se maomao'akia fuag ne teren te'is 'e reko ia te nonojot ka te pumuet tape'ma la is la 'asok katoagteis e te' ne fau 'e ka 'ati'se la is la manaf'ak ka 'ahae'ak faeag fas'ak ka pulio ne os re mamfua 'e haiporokiget ne iris re 'e avat ne iris na e Rotuma se Sauhanta Vikatorie ma Matanitu Ranranta 'e 13th May, 1881:

***“ Hugag'esea ma feeni, tae la
Ut'akia is famor Rotuma se rere”.***

Gou la sokoaf haiporokiagteis ma 'ea;

***Huagag'esea ia ho'am Hairot'akiga
Huagag'esea ia ho'am Haifakte'akiga
Huagag'esea ia ho'am Hai'afaiiga
Huagag'esea ia ho'am Hai'aleleiga
ka 'ati'se
Huagag'esea ia 'ahele'ua HAIHANISIGA***

To the Chiefs of Rotuma, Gagaj Maraf, Gagaj Kausiriaf, Gagaj Markao, Gagaj Fikitu'a, Gagaj Tuiporot, Gagaj Mora', Gagaj Osias and your good wives, the Chairman of the Council of Rotuma, Mr. Terterani Rigamoto, Members of the Council and Representatives of the Seven Districts of Noatau, Oinafa, Ituti'u, Malha'a, Juju, Pepjei and Itu'muta, The District Officer/Rotuma, Mr. Nicholas Ting, Heads of Government Departments and members of the Civil Service here represented, Reverends and Father, Elders of the Church and Senior Members of the Clergy, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Youths of Rotuma and School Children, **Good Morning, Ni sa Bula Vinaka, Namaste, Noa'ia 'e Mauri** and a **blessed day** to you all.

It is indeed an honour, privilege and pleasure for me as the Council of Rotuma's Special Representative with the Interim Government to be invited to officiate on behalf of Government as the Chief Guest and deliver the Opening Address for this year's **Rotuma Day** Celebrations.

In this regard it is my pleasant duty to offer to you the Chiefs and people of Rotuma the greetings and good wishes of **His Excellency the President, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Commodore JV Bainimarama**, the **Honourable Prime Minister, Head of the Interim Government** and Minister directly responsible for Rotuma, Honourable Members of the Interim Government, the Chiefs and people of our beloved nation Fiji.

Ladies and Gentlemen we are gathered here today to commemorate and celebrate Rotuma Day in remembrance of the importance and significance of the historical events which took place in Motusa, **One Hundred and Twenty Nine Years** ago. We have started today's celebration early this morning at the very site where the Deed of Cession was signed.

On the **13th May, 1881**, our Chiefs and Forefathers in their collective **wisdom, trust** and **hope**, ceded our little island and its people to **Her Majesty Queen Victoria** and **Her Britannic Government**.

I believe it prudent and appropriate therefore, that we should remind us once again of the ***Pledge of allegiance*** and ***Solemn Affirmation*** that was made on the day which reads:

“ We the chiefs of Rotuma, with the knowledge and assent of our respective tribes, and in accordance with their desire, do on our own behalf and that of our respective tribes, hereby cede and surrender absolutely, unreservedly and unconditionally to Her Majesty Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, the possession of and full sovereignty over all ports, harbors, roadsteads, streams and adjacent thereto: praying that Her Majesty will be pleased to extend to us such laws as now govern her Native subjects in the Colony of Fiji, or such other laws as in Her Majesty’s wisdom she may see fit to make and appoint for our Government and for the maintenance of peace and good order.”

Since then, the British Colonial Administration and successive Governments of Fiji has ruled with justice and compassion, quite cognizant of our unique cultural and traditional heritage and our ***special bond*** and ***relationship*** with the ***Chiefs*** and ***people of Fiji***.

Our forefathers’ famous catchcry of ***“Viti kei Rotuma”*** has been further strengthened by more interaction and inter-marriages between members of our communities.

As we celebrate today, let us remember and acknowledge with ***humble gratitude*** and ***appreciation the contributions*** of past Fijian Administrations in their quest to develop Rotuma and assist our small island community over the past years.

We have come a long way and certainly a lot has been achieved over the ***past 129 years***. But, ***never in Rotuma’s short history has so much been accomplished by an Administration in improving the lot of our island community in so short a span of time as those development projects which have been initiated, on-going and completed by the present Interim Government***. Development programmes to repair and renovate existing infrastructure and improving the income generating capacity of the island community has been ***unprecedented, impressive*** and ***commendable*** indeed.

In view of this I consider it most appropriate, as it would be remiss of me as the Council of Rotuma's Special Representative with the Interim Government, if I do not acknowledge on behalf of the Chiefs and people of Rotuma and express our collective and **profound appreciation** and **gratitude** for the personal support and commitment of **Commodore JV Bainimarama, the Honourable Prime Minister, Head of Interim Government** and Minister directly responsible for Rotuma for the Interim Government's accomplishments in Rotuma to date.

We are most humble and grateful and would like to say;
"Noa'ia 'e hanisi ko Gagaj, ma fai'aksea 'e garue lelei."
"Vinaka Saka Vakalevu na nomuni Veikawaitaki."

In fact, **what has been achieved in record time** embodies but more importantly, is **testimony** to the fulfillment of a **Promise for Change** – real and lasting change for a **better** and **prosperous future** for our island community, based on our shared values and principles as contained and clearly stipulated in the **Peoples Charter for change, Peace and Progress**.

What the Interim Government has accomplished to date has given us the **confidence** to work more **honestly** and **harder**, and the **audacity to Hope** for what we can and must do together as a community to further enhance **peace** and **prosperity** on the island.

Government has played its part, therefore it is incumbent upon us as a community to **accept reality** and **improve** our performance individually and collectively and hopefully shirk off the preponderance of a **"Wait and See and Hand-Out"** mentality, that for too long has hindered productivity and progress in Rotuma.

We have now embarked on this historical **Journey for Change** which has been instigated by the Honourable Prime Minister and the Interim Government, therefore **let us also be the generation** that is going to be **bold**, **determined** and **resolute** enough to **accept, appreciate** and take advantage of this golden opportunity to come together and **strive towards** a better future for all.

Recently Rotuma has been declared a **Port of Entry** by the Interim Government and trading of Agricultural produce with the island state of **Tuvalu** is going to commence soon. To ensure the success of this venture, the Interim Government has kindly granted a start-up capital of **\$150,000.00** to the Council of Rotuma for its commercial arm, the **Rotuma Export and Marketing Cooperation Ltd** to commence trading operations as soon as administratively possible.

Ladies and gentlemen you can see before you today, the tangible results and proof of Government's commitment and guarantee that the marketing of Rotuma's agricultural produce is a **success story**. The packing shed with its deep freezer and cooler together with the Quarantine's Hot Air Treatment plant facility has been completed and operations are to begin soon following final certification by the appropriate authorities.

The staff from the **Fiji Islands Revenue and Customs Authority** (FIRCA) and **Ministry of Agriculture and Quarantine** officials who are to supervise and assist in the marketing operations have arrived on the island, so let us welcome them, ensure that they are well looked after and let us work together and learn from them.

In recent months we have had a number of visits from Government officials and let us acknowledge and register our appreciation and gratitude for the personal support and commitment of the **Honourable Timoci Natuva**, Minister for Works and Transport and his Senior Officials who have been regular visitors to our shores. Much has been achieved through the Honourable Minister's personal intervention and drive.

Similarly it would be remiss of me if I do not acknowledge and commend other senior Government Cabinet Ministers and their staff for their support in bringing to fruition much needed development programmes which come under their respective portfolios.

The **Honourable Ratu Epeli Ganilau** Minister for Defence and Immigration has been very supportive and instrumental in ensuring that **Border Security** issues associated with the declaration of **Rotuma as a Port of Entry** are put in place and well trained, experienced and qualified personnel are posted to Rotuma. The

Police contingent in Rotuma has been increased in strength and there has also been a corresponding improvement to facilities and equipment. The new Police Station Officer, **Inspector Semi Waqavonovono** is a long serving career officer who has an equally qualified and experienced law enforcement detachment of officers who will assist him in the **maintenance of law and order** and ensure that **aversion to the Rule of Law** will no longer be **tolerated** and **accepted**.

The **Honourable Jonetani Cokanasiga**, Minister for Primary Industries and his senior officials have been equally supportive with the posting to Rotuma of two experienced and qualified Agricultural Technical Service Officers, **Akariva Vesavesa** and **Aise Narema**. The Quarantine Department is being ably represented by **Ms Lorraine Doughty** who had already made her presence felt on the island since her arrival by reminding the community of our individual and collective responsibility in keeping pests out of Rotuma and why it is imperative that the fruit-fly scourge is eradicated.

The **Honourable Doctor Neil Sharma**, Minister for Health and his staff are to be commended also for their support in ensuring that **Doctor Simione Nadakuitavuki** and his staff in our Rural Hospital continue to function effectively in performing **preventative** and **curative** health treatment and other Health care programmes.

The **education** of our young generation is of **paramount importance** and we should also acknowledge with gratitude and appreciation recent improvements to the Schools in Rotuma. The Rotuma High School has a new Principal, **Mr. Perry Gabriel** who informed me that never in the history of the School has it had so many **qualified** and **experienced** teachers within its staff. I believe that it is also the same with the four Primary Schools throughout the island. There are plans to have a **Vocational Training Centre** established on the island and this is most encouraging as it would help curb the urban drift.

The Interim Government's Development work in repairing/upgrading the existing infrastructure in terms of improving the condition of the coastal and feeder roads, boosting and increasing the capacity of the three bore-hole pumps to provide a continuous supply of water

throughout the island and extending the power and electricity grid to other villages around the island has been on-going.

The airstrip was repaired in 2008 and we now eagerly await the commencement and completion of the renovation work to upgrade it to a **Category 'C'** airport under **CAAFI/ICAO** regulations to allow bigger types of Aircraft (like Pacific Sun's, ATR 42 Aircraft) to service the island in future.

Rotuma is no longer going to be that isolated nor disadvantaged and we should be forever mindful and grateful for the **Honourable Prime Minister's personal commitment and support** and that of his Interim Government in concentrating much of the regime's development effort to rural island communities throughout Fiji. Despite financial constraints and other priorities in national development needs, the Interim Government has demonstrated that although it can not solve every problem and meet every need, **a new dawn of leadership** is at hand, a leadership that is not only **honest**, but is also **considerate, fair** and **very committed** to the challenges and difficult tasks ahead and is **resolute** and **determined** to resolve them as soon as possible in the best interest of all.

Ladies and Gentlemen at this juncture, I would like to commend and thank the Council and the Planning Committee for involving our **Youths** in this year's celebration programme. This year's theme **"YOUTH OF TODAY – OUR LEADERS OF TOMORROW"** is most appropriate because it is only natural and expected that they will become our **future parents, Chiefs** and **leaders**, therefore let us look after their interests and nurture their potential. They are **our hope for a better and brighter future**. In this regard, I would like to wish the Youth Co-ordinator, **Ms. Betty Inia**, her officials and our youth well and every success in their activities tomorrow. You can be assured that as parents, we will be here to support and cheer you on in what we hope and pray will be a memorable and enjoyable day for all.

To the Chief's, Chairman and members of the Council, distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls let me conclude by **congratulating** and thanking each and everyone of you for your

attendance here today as we commemorate and celebrate **Rotuma's 129th Anniversary of Cession.**

As alluded to before, much has been achieved in our island's short history and as we celebrate in the **traditional manner** with much **dancing** and **feasting**, let us always **acknowledge** and be **forever grateful** for **Almighty God's** blessings upon our beloved nation Fiji and our small island of Rotuma and its people.

In paying compliments to the Honourable Prime Minister and the Interim Government, I would like to add my personal compliments and appreciation to **Mr. Tomasi Tui** the former Commissioner Eastern, now Deputy Secretary/Director Rotuma Development Projects who has been a **tower of strength and pillar of support** in coordinating and monitoring all development work for Rotuma. He has been the **Quiet** and **Silent Achiever** behind the scenes. Similarly, I would like to commend and thank the District Officer, Rotuma, **Mr. Nicholas Ting** who has been very supportive and involved as a member of the Interim Government Task Force Team.

Gagaj Atakao;
Faiaksea
Vinaka Saka Vakalevu
Dhanyavat; and
Thank you All!


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JK KONROTE
MAJOR GENERAL (Ret'd)