



HIS EXCELLENCY RATU EPELI NAILATIKAU

CF, LVO, OBE (Mil), OStJ, CSM, MSD
President of the Republic of Fiji

**ADDRESS AT THE UNVEILING OF FIJI'S NEW FLORA AND FAUNA
DESIGN BANKNOTES AND COINS**

Novotel Convention Centre
LAMI

Wednesday, 22nd November, 2012
10.00a.m.

- The Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama
- Honourable Ministers
- The Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji, Barry Whiteside
- The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps
- Your Excellencies the Ambassadors and High Commissioners
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- The Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of Fiji
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning, ni sa bula vinaka, namaskar.

At the outset let me thank the Governor for the invitation to be the Chief Guest on this historic occasion to officiate at the unveiling of Fiji's 2012 Flora and Fauna series of banknotes and coins.

I have been told that the new series includes a number of significant changes. For example, apart from the exciting new designs, our currency will include for the first time, a \$2 coin and a \$5 polymer (or "plastic") banknote.

This marks not only an important milestone for the Reserve Bank towards the evolution of Fiji's currency system, but also for the nation as well. The design and technical changes made by the Reserve Bank are indeed significant and bold and, I understand, are on par with anything at the international level. The designs have been deliberately selected by a team of eminent Fijians to firmly remind us all of our beautiful national heritage that can all be too easily lost, if we fail to protect and treasure them.

While our endemic flora and fauna may be things of natural beauty and pride, there is an underlying need to forever preserve, protect and promote them to the world.

I urge us all, if you are not doing so already, to begin appreciating what lies around us in this beautiful country of ours, and to take great pride in our environment. Damage to our environment and its habitat can be done in a matter of minutes. Restoration of the same can take generations.

Let us act now to preserve our environment for our children and the many more generations of Fijians to come.

I must say that the Reserve Bank has taken a step in the right direction by incorporating some of Fiji's unique flora and fauna onto our banknotes and coins. This is indeed high recognition, as currency is another form of a nation's identity. The more appealing and relevant the designs on our currency are to our national heritage, the more our currency portrays our nation.

Let us, therefore, take pride in our money by appreciating the designs embedded in them. They are there to promote our uniqueness and our national heritage to the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, with the new series comes a little sadness as well for many of us. We will witness a historical change. A change involving much feeling and sentiment

and representing an emotional severance of a link to the British crown - but it is a change that is necessary. Our notes and coins will no longer feature the portrait of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Some will liken this to the dawn of a new era. For the past 78 years our currency has always featured members of the British Royal family (with the exception of the Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau and the Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara millennium notes). Historically, we have had a close association with the Royal family and Fijians have shown them the greatest respect.

His Majesty, King George V was the first British monarch to be featured on our currency notes and coins in 1934 when Fiji's own pre-decimal currency structure was first introduced and continued with His Majesty King George VI through to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II when she began her reign. Our last banknote series introduced in 2007 and our smaller and lighter coins introduced in 2009 again featured the portrait of Her Majesty the Queen.

Our past and present notes and coins have over many years given us much pride and recognition both locally and internationally, and we are forever grateful to the Royal family for allowing us to use their effigies.

However, it is now time to move forward as we strive to create our own identity synonymous to what Fiji is all about, its people, its resources and its national heritage.

Ladies and gentlemen, the new 2012 series of banknotes and coins feature designs of our local endemic flora and fauna, some of which are believed to be extinct, given that they have not been sighted for many years. The designs will continue the tradition of promoting our uniqueness as a nation to the world.

The pride of the series will not be in any one denomination but across all the denominations. Each note and coin features a flora or fauna design that is virtually unique or endemic to Fiji. Some cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

The design subjects range from the birds of Kadavu to the high misted forests of Taveuni, to a truly unique insect, to iconic flowers, and to marine species found in highland streams and in our oceans.

I am thankful that the Reserve Bank chose the underlying flora and fauna theme and especially those subjects which we need to recognize and protect.

We celebrated the Year of Biodiversity in 2010 when the Bank first started work on this new currency series and this certainly is a celebration of our national treasure, and the natural beauty with which this nation is blessed.

The selection of these themes has been done meticulously to help educate us all of our national heritage and for all of us to act now to protect them for the future generations of Fijians.

I understand that the introduction of Fiji's first \$2 coin and a polymer \$5 banknote has been taken to enhance the durability of these two denominations, thereby saving costs for the nation.

I applaud the Reserve Bank's efforts to try and achieve cost savings and, where possible, saving the people of Fiji their hard earned money since currency procurement is not a cheap exercise.

Much concerted planning and hard work have gone into this project since its commencement in February 2010. The efforts of those involved in the project must be recognized. And they are deserving of our congratulations.

I join the Governor in thanking the Currency Design Committee for making the difficult choices, bearing in mind our cultural and ethnic diversity. Being a nation rich in biodiversity, the task must have been a very difficult one.

I also join the Governor in thanking the Reserve Bank's Currency Technical Committee for working tirelessly to watch over the complex process of designing, producing and taking delivery of our new banknotes and coins, and for devising a public education awareness exercise that will commence from today, designed to educate not only the Fijian people but also those interested in our currency and in our flora and fauna.

I also extend my sincere gratitude to the banknote printers, De La Rue Currency of the United Kingdom, and the Royal Canadian Mint of Canada, for meeting the tight timeframes that were set by the Reserve Bank.

Without their cooperation, the culmination of this new design series, from just a concept to the final banknotes and coins, would not have been possible. I am sure that both De La Rue and the Royal Canadian Mint have devoted their best resources to make our currency not only attractive but also certainly one of the best in the world.

Our past and current currencies have always been well designed, bearing in mind the needs of the Fijian people.

I am also confident that the Reserve Bank has maintained that same standard in this new series.

I am confident that I will continue to be a proud Fijian when I next use my money that will have the images of our national heritage, something of which we should all be deeply proud.

Ladies and gentlemen, I now have the pleasure of officially unveiling Fiji's 2012 Flora and Fauna design series of banknotes and coins

Thank you, vinaka vakalevu and bahoot dhanyavaad.
