

MESSAGE OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, NATIONAL HERITAGE, CULTURE & ARTS, YOUTH & SPORTS, FROM DR BRIJ LAL FOR THE WILSON INIA DAY HELD AT ROTUMA ON 18 AUGUST 2011

"To shape tomorrow, the work is done today. Then let's look at today. What we are today had been shaped in the past. For in those shaping processes are men and women who work not for themselves but for everyone. They sacrifice not for personal gain but for their fellow man's benefit. There are those whose contributions became so distinct that they leave behind a mark even when they are no longer. Their name would always be engraved in the hearts and mind of the people and will be cherished continuously from generations to generations."

Today the Ministry of Education joins Rotuma in commemorating a distinctive man whom Rotuma sees as the Hef Ran Ta [Morning Star]. The name Wilson Inia is synonymous with great leadership in the whole of Rotuma. His leadership did more to shape Rotuma's destiny during the 20th century. In the dawning of a new age he was a guide: a beacon by which Rotuma steered.

The establishment of the Rotuma High School 53 years ago was one of the success stories of Wilson Inia's vision. This man of vision foresaw the importance of education for his people. He knew that education is the overall key for improvement in the development of Rotuma and its people. What the government wants today is what Wilson wanted for Rotuma, i.e to be a Knowledge Based Society. I therefore urge the people of Rotuma to continue along what Wilson Inia had set to make education a priority in families. Fiji today prioritizes education. The government of the day is doing all it can to assist. What the government wants is for every student of school age to attend school and reach the highest secondary education level that can be reached and then advanced into tertiary education.

We commemorate a man of vision and a man of dreams. In today's celebration, I am challenging the young people of Rotuma, especially students, to dream and dream big. Make that dream a reality. When that dream becomes real, please don't think of your own success but also keep in mind how you can contribute effectively to your people and to your land.

Being the first politician who led Rotuma into the modern age, Wilson strived for development but believed in preserving of traditions. As you celebrate and commemorate today, remember that we are honouring a man who cared about identity. People of Rotuma, please do not neglect to educate your children about your culture and traditions.

Today, we also honour a moral leader and a devout Christian. We are entering an era where the institution of culture, religion and family are greatly challenged by western values. As we reflect on the life of this great man, let's reflect it on our individual families to see how moral education prevails. Let's not rely on schools to administer moral education alone. I am reminding parents that you play the major role at home.

As we unveil the monument and the plaque today, I challenged the young people of Rotuma: "Who will be the next Wilson Inia?" Rotuma needs more Wilson Inia to continue the journey for the protection of Rotuma, leadership of Rotuma and setting of visions for Rotuma.

May I at this point, thank the organisers of today's event. This is an event that rightfully needs recognition and celebration. May you celebrate this day with high and meaningful spirit.

I salute this great man WILSON INIA, and May God Bless Rotuma!

Brij Lal
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education, National Heritage,
Culture & Arts, Youth & Sports