

**FOURTH DAY**

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**Friday 25 May 2018**

**DRAFT HANSARD**

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<b><u>Subject:</u></b>	<b><u>Page No.:</u></b>
Statement by the Speaker.....	2
.....QUESTIONS.....	
<b>Parliamentary Committees on Health and Trade and APEC.....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>PNG Defence Force – Disciplinary Measures.....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Confirm Pay Increase for Teachers.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Increase Power Supply in East New Britain.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Derivative Grant.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>European Union Grant - East Sepik Cocoa.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Sale of War Relic- Swamp Ghost.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Bougainville Road Sealing.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>China Railway Funding.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Machinery Equipment for West Sepik.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Piracy at Samarai-Murua.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>LEAVE OF ABSENCE.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b><u>ADJOURNMENT</u>.....</b>	<b>17</b>

## **FOURTH DAY**

**Friday 25 May 2018**

The Speaker (**Mr Job Pomat**) took the Chair at 10 a.m..

There being no quorum present, Mr Speaker stated that he would resume the Chair after the ringing of the bells.

Sitting suspended.

The Speaker again took the Chair at 10.45 a.m., and invited the Member for Jimi, **Honourable Wake Goi**, to say Prayers:

‘We pray that you will continue to bless us and give us wisdom to operate each day to help develop this nation and help our people. Thank you that you love us and you will continue to work in us. Thank you for the missionaries and thank you for the people that brought your good news and already we know you are our true God, and help us to think of you and follow you when making earthly business. Lord, I thank you also for our people that some are very good people with good wisdom that you have provided to them. And we also pray for those who are faced with problems in following you Lord, you will help them as well. Lord we thank you, thank you and thank you that we have this freedom of worship. In other places around the world they don’t have this freedom to worship you. And we pray that this Government and the leaders and the future leaders to come will continue to uphold your word and you will be our God all throughout as we await for your second coming of your son and king Jesus. We just pray and commit this day and we would want to pray the prayers that you have taught us, Amen.’

### **COURT OF DISPUTE OF RETURNS – STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**

**Mr SPEAKER** – Honourable Members, I present the National Court Order AP19 of 2017, dated 15 May 2018, which set as a court of disputed returns in the matter between Mr Gordon Wesley and Mr Isi Henry Leonard and the Electoral Commissioner of PNG.

The Court ordered that the results of the recount for the Samarai-Murua Open Electorate where formally rectified as correct and valid. Pursuant to Section 212 of the Organic Law on National and Local-level Government Elections, it was declared that Mr Isi Henry Leonard was duly elected as Member for Samarai-Murua Open Electorate.

I welcome the Honourable Member.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **Parliamentary Committees on Health and Trade and APEC**

**Dr ALLAN MARAT** – Mr Speaker, I ask leave of the Chair to ask you a question.

**Mr SPEAKER** – Go ahead, leave is granted.

**Dr ALLAN MARAT** – Yesterday, the Opposition caucus was informed about the state of health especially the outpatients at Port Moresby General Hospital.

My questions relates to Parliamentary Committee on Health and the Parliamentary Committee on Trade and APEC. I am just quoting these two parliamentary committees which look into real detailed issues and report back to Parliament.

**02/04**

Mr Speaker, in the past, Parliament would sit for two weeks and on the third week, these Parliamentary Committees would meet.

My question is, can these Parliamentary Committees be more active, especially the one on Trade and APEC?

APEC Summit is coming up in November and this Parliament, as far as I can recollect, has not had the benefit of some rather very detailed information on what is happening apart from what we read in the two daily newspapers and on TV.

So, Mr Speaker, that is my question, when can they be put into some real activity?

**Mr SPEAKER** – Thank you, Honourable Member, for the question.

As the Speaker, I will discuss this with the Leader of Government Business so we can establish these committees and they can do their jobs.

## **PNG Defence Force – Disciplinary Measures**

**Mr RICHARD MASERE** – My question is directed to the Minister for Defence. This is in relation to an incident that happened a few days ago where a Defence Force personnel attacked a medical doctor and in the process the doctor sustained some injuries where he suffered damages to one of his eyes and his hearing is also impaired as a result of that attack.

Mr Speaker, as we all know, the PNG Defence Force personnel go through vigorous training programmes where they are given a certain level of training and when they attack citizens who lack that same kind of training to defend themselves they sustain serious injuries.

This is not the first time PNG Defence Force has been brought under the microscope because of the actions of their personnel. Their policy on ‘one strike and you’re out’, does not really address the issue.

The issue is that there is a lot of young people in the military that quite often because of their training to fight and their want for something better to do end up getting drunk and get into situations like this.

- (1) What action is the PNG Defence Force taking to minimise or mitigate these incidents from happening again?
- (2) What kind of control mechanisms or programmes will they run in the army to ensure that we don’t have a repeat of this situation in the future?

**Mr SOLAN MIRISIM** – I thank the Member for Ijivitari for his questions.

The latest incident involving the assault on the doctor has been condemned in the strongest terms. We have gone to the media and we have spoken about this. And the culprit involved in the assault on the doctor has been locked up. The Military Police have locked him up already after identifying him.

Our investigations have already been done and he has being transferred to civil police. He is now locked up at Boroko Police Station where he is being further investigated and will be charged accordingly.

We have this strong policy of zero tolerance for this sort of behaviour and our disciplinary action is termination from the force.

This particular officer has done the same thing a couple of times and has been terminated from the Force but somehow he was reinstated.

I assure the Member that investigation reports are all completed and I expect that the hierarchy of the Force will take appropriate action after civil charges are laid against that particular officer.

The Defence Force hierarchy does not condone these sorts of behaviour because a members of a disciplinary force are trained to respect and uphold values and codes. It is unbecoming of an officer to be involved in bashing up civilians which brings the Force to disrepute.

Mr Speaker, I appeal to the Doctors Association and also the family of the victim that was abused to be rest assured that we will get to the bottom of this issue and make sure that this officer will be dealt with accordingly.

### **Confirm Pay Increase for Teachers**

**Mr BRIAN KRAMMER** – Mr Speaker, my question was supposed to be directed to the Minister for Education but it also relates to the issue of Treasury and Finance and since the Minister for Treasury is here, I will direct my question to him.

Mr Speaker, this question is in relation to teachers' pay rise.

In 2016 December, an agreement was reached between the O'Neill Government and the Teachers Service Commission to award a 3 per cent pay rise to Teachers which will take effect in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Unfortunately, since 2017, teachers are still waiting for a pay rise.

Before the beginning of this school year amid talk of the increase in cost of education, the Government made another announcement of a pay increase in 2018 of 3 percent.

I have been receiving too many requests from teachers to raise this question in Parliament on when they will receive the 3 percent pay rise.

There are about 57 000 teachers which is the largest sector in our public service. Their role is perhaps one of the most important as we are entrusting them with our future generation.

We continue to make statements of pay increase and get them all excited and they know that they will be recognised for their hard work to look after our future generation, but we have yet to honour that commitment.

After reviewing the Budget briefly, I cannot see this provision for this 3 percent pay rise.

(1) Can the Minister confirm whether there is a provision in the Budget for this 3 percent pay rise?

If there is none then such statements would be irresponsible and misleading.

(2) If it is included in the Budget, when will they get paid?

**Mr CAHRLES ABLE** - Mr Speaker, I thank the Member for Madang for raising these important questions in relation to a very important part of our public service; the teachers but not only the teachers, we also have our Police Force and all the other element of public service that in most cases continue to provide good service throughout the country.

Mr Speaker, we have commitments to our public servants through various awards that are negotiated through the involvement of the unions as well and handled primarily through our Department of Personnel Management. We have some commitments in relation to those pay rises that resulted in a negotiated outcome to provide a 3 percent increase for 2017 and 2018.

Mr Speaker, Cabinet recently endorsed some further negotiations in relation to those awards and it has directed the Treasury, Finance and Personnel Management Departments to come up with a payment scheme to make sure that those commitments are fulfilled through 2018 into 2019.

Those arrangements have been made and the departments responsible are ensuring that those commitments, particularly the 2017 outstanding and the catch up into 2018 are fulfilled before the end of the year and of course before the APEC Summit begins.

**04/04**

Mr Speaker, we are aware of that obligation and we have factored that into our resourcing and we will fulfil those commitments to our teachers and also the police and the public service in general in regards to that 3 per cent commitment for 2017 and 2018.

We will pay most in 2018 but others will take a bit more time so it could go into 2019.

**Mr Bryan Krammer** – Point of Order! I asked whether there is provision in the Budget for this pay increase. If it is not in the Budget then he cannot lawfully pay the teachers. If it is in the Budget then those payments can be made in 2018.

**Mr SPEAKER** – Your point of order is out of order! I think the Minister answered it and indirectly told us that it is not in the Budget. The Government is looking at it and will accommodate this issue. This is how the Chair understands it.

### **Increase Power Supply in East New Britain**

**Mr NAKIKUS KONGA** – I direct my question to the Minister for State Enterprise. Before I ask my question, I would like to thank the last Government because they declared Kokopo Town as the capital of East New Britain and the New Guinea Islands Region.

Mr Speaker, we are connecting electricity to about 15 houses every day not only in the urban areas but also in the villages. I am pleased that the people are building houses to accommodate electricity but it is still a big problem. At times there are power blackouts for two to three days. PNG Power staff do carryout their responsibilities but our problem is we cannot generate enough power.

Last week Friday, I sat down with the CEO of PNG Power and during our discussions, I realised that we are going to face more major problems in the coming years. This is due to the fact that there will be big factories built to cater for the oil palm projects in the province and as such these factories will need huge amounts of power supply.

When will PNG Power through the Government increase the power supply in East New Britain?

**Mr WILLIAM DUMA** – I thank the Governor of East New Britain for his question.

In response, PNG Power has already placed advertisements in the newspapers calling for a tender to refurbish the Waragoi Power Station so plans are in an advanced stage. Once the tenders are completed and the final bidders are established, we will work towards increasing power supply in the province.

I can assure the Governor that PNG Power has not ignored the plight of our people there. In the coming years when the process has been completed we should be able to rehabilitate the Waragoi power supply. They are aware of the increasing needs of power supply there and that is why they have already gone ahead with the plans to address the problem.

**05/04**

### **Derivative Grant**

**Mr ALLAN BIRD** – Mr Speaker, before I direct my question to the Treasurer, if you may allow me, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister for his timely

intervention in assisting us together with the Minister for Public Service in getting the appointment of the provincial administrator for East Sepik through after almost 11 years without a permanent appointment.

I want to place on record the gratitude of the Sepik people to both the Prime Minister and the Minister and to commend the Government in having some very good ministers who do attend to their duties. I also want to commend the Government for allowing the good processes of the public service to stand up, particularly the merit-based appointment system.

Mr Speaker, this is the first time in the history of East Sepik where the appointment of an administrator was made without the building being locked down and without the need for police presence and that is a credit to the merit-based appointment system that the Government is upholding.

Secondly, I want to thank the Minister for Agriculture for the good work he has done towards the export of vanilla. We saw in the newspaper yesterday, that Papua New Guinea is now ranked as the second best quality vanilla exporter in the world. So I thank the Minister for Agriculture, his secretary and his deputy for the job well done. We must be honest, let us give credit where it is due.

Mr Speaker, my question is in relation to derivative grants for agricultural commodities.

Mr Speaker, there was a time when East Sepik was producing about 22 thousand tonnes of cocoa year before the pod borer hit us, but the derivative grants for those exports never came to us because the exports were made from other provinces.

Likewise, East Sepik is producing 95 per cent of the vanilla in the country and putting the country on the map, however, the exports are being made from other provinces again.

Mr Speaker, there is no support for our cocoa or vanilla farmers. As you are aware, Treasurer, we are looking to get donor funds to try and support the hard working farmers of East Sepik to continue to put Papua New Guinea on the map and we are struggling with that.

If we cannot receive government funds and we do not receive donor funds, then derivative grants must reach the East Sepik people for their hard work and commitment regardless of which province they are exporting it from. This is so that the provincial government can continue to maintain the infrastructure so that our farmers can continue to produce the crops to earn revenue and foreign exchange for the country because right now we are unable to support them.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.



**Mr CHARLES ABEL** –Mr Speaker, I thank the Governor of East Sepik for his question in relation to agriculture and supporting the farmers in East Sepik.

He mentions derivative grants as one potential of the source of support of farmers. Derivative grants certainly was an element of our system previously. I will have to verify but I don't think that particular provision exists anymore in our legislation in relation to some sort of benefits occurring back to the province in relation to exports that originate in that province.

**Mr Allan Bird** – Point of order! Mr Speaker, I want to correct the Minister. Recently, we received derivative grants for tuna export direct from the East Sepik Market.

**Mr CHARLES ABEL** – Thank you, Mr Speaker, well that is good to hear that East Sepik is getting some benefit out of the derivative grants in the first instance.

I take note of your comment in relation to vanilla and cocoa. If historically some benefits did accrue for East Sepik, we can find out whether those moneys can be made available. I can certainly say that I am not aware of a budgetary provision around derivative grants. That must relate back to the necessity for that in relation to a foundation in law somewhere in the tax system but we can certainly look into that.

**06/04**

I know that Sepik area in general is very conducive to agriculture and there has been a significant intervention by our Government in relation to trying to get something going in the East Sepik Plains as one of the identified priority area that is conducive to agriculture. There has been much talk in Parliament about that and there has been significant amount of money allocated there and we look forward to some of that progressing.

We've been talking about projects such as developing rice industry in conjunction with the East Sepik Provincial Government and potentially utilising and working with the farmers there to make that possible.

I also want to say that in terms of support to the cocoa production and also the vanilla in West and East Sepik provinces, that program has been developed with the European Union which involves a significant amount of money to the value of Euro85 million over period of time to begin strategic intervention to support production of cocoa and vanilla.

The partnership of the Agriculture Minister and the provincial government will enable significant support for infrastructure, technology and marketing for the farmers within that

area. The program is not also intended to make interventions there but it's a beginning of a program that will cover other parts of the country on cocoa and vanilla.

Some of the rhetorics in the Budget especially special interventions into agriculture and emphasis there, there are funds we are making available through the commercialisation fund through NDB for smaller farmers and also for high level interventions. I come back to those zones that we have identified like the Sepik valley, Baiyer valley, Karamui and the Central Plains that we are looking at in a bigger sense.

Mr Speaker, in a smaller sense, you know that our Government tries to resource the lower level of government in the districts in terms of funding that are coming down there. We once again reiterate that the districts and provincial government should take advantage of that additional funding that is going down to that level.

A portion of that is allocated to supporting the economic industry support and in most of our districts, the relevant economic sector is the agriculture sector and many Members of Parliament are making interventions in that area.

There is also the Freight Assurance Program that is happening through the DAL to support remote farmers in terms of getting their crops to the market. There are different avenues within the Government's interventions but, Mr Speaker, I will look into the derivative grants query that you have mentioned, but as I have said, there are significant support through the European Union and the Department of Agriculture in that specific program, targeted at cocoa and vanilla production in East and West Sepik.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER** – Honourable Member for Madang, you have already asked a question and now you are trying to ask a supplementary question. As I have said yesterday, we do not have enough time so I would like to give opportunity to Members who have not yet asked questions to do so.

Since you already stood up, I will allow you to ask your supplementary question. That's your last supplementary question for today.

### **Supplementary Question**

#### **European Union Grant - East Sepik Cocoa**

**Mr BRYAN KRAMMER** – Thank you, Mr Speaker, the *Standing Order* does provide for supplementary questions that's why we are following the *Standing Order*. Thank you.

The supplementary question goes to the Treasury Minister in relation to the grants. There was a letter circulating in social media from the Minister for Planning in relation to the EU funding as you have raised in your response.

I just want to confirm his position in relation to this EU Grant for some K340 million that was committed to the East Sepik cocoa growers.

I understand the Minister for Planning has requested for the funding to be directed towards upgrading work along the Highlands Highway.

**Mr CHARLES ABEL-** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm not aware of the commentary in relation to that on the social media as I don't spend much time on the social media as others. But I know as far as the European Union program and the progress so far, it was designed around East and West Sepik.

Mr Speaker, we know that there is another comprehensive program for the Highlands Highway being the US\$1 billion trench. It is a multi-trench facility that we are negotiating with the Asian Development Bank of which we are about to begin the drawdown of the first trench of US\$300 million, and those tenders are about to be awarded.

**07/04**

That is the main program of the Highlands Highway. The European Union program is an agricultural program and in the first instance was targeted at East and West Sepik provinces.

### **Sale of War Relic- Swamp Ghost**

**Mr RENBO PAITA** – Mr Speaker, before I proceed with my questions, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for acknowledging my deputy leader as a Member for Pangu Pati, and also I congratulate the Member for Samarai-Murua for winning his Court case.

My questions are directed to the Minister responsible for arts, culture and tourism and I would like the Ministers for Immigration and Police to take note. This is in relation to the alleged sale of the World War II relic *Swamp Ghost* that is now being displayed in a museum in the USA. Upon allowing the relic to be exported an MOU was signed in 2009.

(1) Can the Minister inform the people of Papua New Guinea when will the War Museum be built as promised since 2009?

A thorough investigation was carried out by the Australian television program *60 Minutes* exposing fraud among other things and was dubbed as one of the greatest fraud in World War II aviation history.

(2) Can the Minister confirm or deny why the Museum board of Trustees have questioned the presentation by *60 Minutes*?

(3) Can the Minister confirm or deny that this individual, **Mr Robert Grenham**, the mastermind of this suspicious export, has been reported to be seen in Papua New Guinea with his associates, although he has been banned from entering?

The Museum Board is fully aware of the MOU, yet they have been silent over the last nine years with no regard in the heritage and laws of this country.

(4) Can the Minister inform the Parliament and the owners of the heritage what the Museum Board has done to protect PNG's national heritage from being plundered by foreigners for commercial gains.

With the *Swamp Ghost* gone and a failed MOU of 2009 and a ground breaking ceremony for the war museum of 2012, with no regard to the Public Accounts Committee report carried out by the former Speaker of Parliament on the sale of the old House of Assembly, how many more of this will we see and tolerate?

(5) Can the Minister please provide us with some answers on these questions that I have raised?

**Mr EMIL TAMMUR** – Mr Speaker, I thank the Member for Finschaffien for his series of questions regarding our national heritage.

But before I proceed to respond to his questions, I would like to take this opportunity as to make a few remarks as this is the first time I am speaking as Minister and Member for the people of Kokopo.

Firstly, I thank the people of Kokopo for giving me the mandate to represent them in Parliament and also the Prime Minister for giving me this portfolio in this Government. I also wish to congratulate the Speaker on his appointment to the Chair.

Going back to the questions raised, these are important questions relating to inheritance of such relics that showcase our country's involvement in World War II.

Since this is the first set of questions directed to me, I would like to inform Parliament that I will get my officers to carry out a full investigation before I can inform the Parliament and the people of Papua New Guinea, maybe through a Ministerial Statement in the next sitting.

### **Bougainville Road Sealing**

**Mr JOE LERA** – Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister for Works and I would like the Minister for State Enterprises to take note.

Before I ask my question, I would like to thank the O'Neill - Abel Government and also the previous O'Neill - Dion Government for assistance received to carry out all the work in Bougainville.

**08/04**

The assistance came through constitutional grants, restoration grants received every year in total of K15 million, and also in various development funding grants such as DSIP, PSIP and intervention funding and also from the partners as well.

The Government put some of these projects on tender but awarding of contracts took too long such as Ramason Power, Arawa-Toimanapu sealing, Toimanapu-Kangu sealing and also to complete Buka ring road. All these projects have been put on tender by the Government and it went through proper process and contracts have been awarded. However, the contractors withdrew after a while. Therefore, I want the Minister to give me an update and for what reason did they withdraw. T

This is the same question asked by Member for South Bougainville last year, and it's almost three years now and projects have not been completed yet. The people are asking us and we don't have any good answer for it.

This question probably applies to other provinces as well so you can reply so that the people of PNG can know why these projects are not complete.

If the delay occurred because of funding then does the Minister intend to seek assistance from donors or friends?

**Mr MICHAEL NALI** – Mr Speaker, I thank the Governor of Bougainville for his questions in relation to all the roads in Bougainville.

Mr Speaker, in consultation with my record regarding the Bougainville roads the contract value awarded stands at K404 million and this amount covers six roads.

In the last Parliament the Deputy Opposition Leader asked me this same question two times. I referred one of the question one to the Minister for National Planning to answer and I tried my best to answer the other.

Mr Speaker, the Government has committed to help Bougainville to make sure that all the roads in Bougainville must be attended to as it is part of the agreement that was established.

There are two major roads; one is contracted to Dekenai Construction and other is to COVEC.

Dekenai is assigned to maintain the road from Rigu Bridge in Kieta to Toimanapu and it will cost about K145 944.094, and upgrading and sealing of roads from Toimanpu-Kangu and Wase in South Bougainville K208 516 922. And there are so many roads also to cover but right now the country is faced with so many natural disasters and other related problems

**09/04**

As I speak our people in Jimi have three big bridges being impassable and the roads have been closed for almost two and a half months but right now we are in the process of putting together contractors. And the contractors have been good enough to assist us from time to time and as we bring in money we pay them piecemeal.

It is not something to hide. As Minister for Works, I am duty bound to work when money is in our accounts and so on, but on the two big contractors in Bougainville, this year we paid them a little, a little meaning K2 to K3 million limit.

Mr Speaker, last week the Department of Works engaged with the Department of Finance to do some allocations for roads in Bougainville especially. So as soon as we get some money from Finance, we will pay the contractors and they will return to constructing the roads. At the moment they are doing minimal work while some have slowed down but we are committed to it.

Mr Speaker, as soon as we get some money from Finance when Treasury releases some money we will continue on those projects.

### **Supplementary Question**

#### **China Railway Funding**

**Mr CHARLIE BENJAMIN** – Thank you, Mr Speaker. There was some news about some funding coming from China Railway International. I believe some of that funding will be allocated for the roads on Bougainville.

- (1) Has the Government received that funding?
- (2) Are you ready to use it on Bougainville?

**Mr MICHAEL NALI** – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have no idea about that money coming in from China Railway so this story is not true. China Railway or any company for that matter cannot just give us money at will. It is up to us to go and secure funding through

properly arranged bank loans or something but from a private construction company, the answer is no. We have not received any money from China Railway.

### **Machinery Equipment for West Sepik**

**Mr TONY WOUWOU** – Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister for Works.

In late October 2017, your secretary and the Works Manager visited parts of the section from Wewak to Aitape and all the way to Wutung along the Momase coastal highway, which starts from Watarais and ends at Wutung.

Mr Minister, you promised the people of West Sepik that you will give them six machines. I think the people of Southern Highlands and Oro have already received theirs but in the case of West Sepik, I have been waiting without seeing any machines and the people are beginning to question me.

In fact, you also announced this on the Floor of Parliament and yet today we are still waiting for those machines which were donated by the Japanese Government.

When will you give us those machines?

**Mr MICHAEL NALI** – Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Governor for his question. The question he asked is true.

Sandaun is entitled to pick up some equipment which were donated by the Japanese Government. These equipment are donated especially for provinces which are prone to disasters such as Northern Province.

**10/04**

These equipment will be sent to the regional centres for example; for the New Guinea Islands they will be based in East New Britain, for the Southern Region they will be in Popondetta and for the Momase Region some will be in Lae while some in Vanimo.

Mr Speaker, equipment for our people of West Sepik and East Sepik are there but right now they are being used to attend to the disaster in the Highlands provinces. This is due to the fact that the Works Department which was closed some 12 years ago by the Mekere Government does not have sufficient equipment to work in those affected areas. Now that we are going back into the restoration program, those equipment will be returned to their respective areas.

## **Piracy at Samarai-Murua**

**Mr ISI HENRY LEONARD** – I thank you for allowing me back on the Floor of Parliament after I was informed by the Clerk that formalities had yet to be done.

I would like to direct my questions to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Fisheries and the Minister for Police to take note. It is in relation to criminal piracy issues in my electorate and the general waters of Milne Bay. I ask you for your patience as I lay out the background and pose the appropriate questions.

On 5 October 2016, Samarai police impounded a Vietnamese vessel and the former Member for Samarai-Murua was alleged to be involved. The boat was under the custody of the Samarai Police.

The following day 6 October 2016, the crew from *MV Tama* owned by the family of former Member of Samarai-Murua boarded the impounded vessel and vandalised and stole K109 000 worth of wet beche-de-mer, 1900 litres of diesel, personal properties and cash belonging to the Vietnamese operators. The Samarai Police were overpowered by the raiders and so Alotau Police were called to assist. They arrived too late as those involved had already disappeared with the stolen items.

Most of the items were not recovered by the task force but the beche-de-mer was found at the former Member's residence. They also confiscated two barrels filled with newly dried beche-de-mer together with the captain and the crew of *MV Tama* and committed them to stand trial in the National Court.

The former Member was not arrested on the directives of the Police Commissioner because he was a person of high stature and the investigations and examinations of the reports by the so-called vetting committee was needed to a certain extent of his involvement.

It is believed that the file on the person was completed and is currently held in the criminal investigation branch in Alotau. Furthermore, as the 2017 Elections was drawing close, the Provincial Police Commander, who headed the investigation was sidelined and it appears that the matter has come to a dead end.

**11/04**

My questions are:

(1) Can you explain why the charging and arrest of the former Member, an alleged accomplice and beneficiary of the piracy-type raid and stealing from the impounded Vietnamese vessel, has to be referred to the vetting committee whilst everybody else was charged in the normal way?



(2) Why did National Fisheries Authority authorise for the uplifting of the ban on bech-de-mer harvest for Milne Bay only straight after the piracy raid for a period of one month and instead of the planned dated April 1, 2017?

(3) Who actually signed the gazettal for the opening date ahead of the scheduled date, and if so, does this amount to an official corruption?

(4) Why has it taken so long for the Police to complete the process ascertaining the extent of the involvement of the former Member for Samarai-Murua?

**Mr SPEAKER** – Honourable Member, you mentioned a couple of Ministers, however your question relates to fisheries and the police.

To whom are your questions directed?

**Mr ISI LEONARD HENRY** – I direct my question to the Police Minister.

**Mr SPEAKER** – The Prime Minister will answer the questions

**Mr PETER O'NEILL** – Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Member for Samarai-Murua.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate him for the confirmation of his victory again by the recount. I welcome him back to Parliament.

Firstly, let me say that the charges and allegations that the Member is stating under Parliamentary privilege here in this Chamber is certainly a police matter that is being investigated. Those allegations about the piracy about the alleged raid on the Vietnamese boats and theft of some fisheries stock and fuel and supplies is a matter that is being investigated by police and as the Member has stated there has been some charges laid. Let us allow the Police and National Court to address that issue. It is not for me to judge if one is guilty of that particular crime or not.

Piracy generally is a huge concern in the Milne Bay Province. We have people robbing passengers along the islands of Milne bay in the middle of the sea. This is being done by our very own people and members of our own community. The people of Milne Bay and various island communities know who they are. But they are protecting them. They need to hand all these suspects across the police and let the police arrest them. They must be held accountable for their actions.

Mr Speaker, I will also find out from the Police Commissioner if there are some allegations against individuals and leaders and whether he has directed that they not be charged, I don't think he has the power to do so. Any investigating officer who has the evidence to charge anybody can do so. Let the police do their work and we will certainly carry on their work and we will certainly carry on from there.

In terms of the beche-de-mer, the season was opened upon the advice of the scientist at the National Fisheries Authority.

Mr Speaker, as you will recall. In the last term of Parliament, there have been many calls for the beche-de-mer season to be opened in Milne Bay but for six years, we allowed the stock to grow and reproduce so the scientist informed the Government through NFA that the season should not be opened. We have a huge task of trying to explain to our people, who wanted the season to be open that it should not be the case because we allowed stock to be open.

Mr Speaker, opening of the beche-de-mer season now that the stock is adequately replenished enough for harvest is bringing income to your people, especially the people of Samarai-Murua who depend on beche-de-mer for their livelihood in that province.

**12/04**

Mr Speaker, it is on advice from the scientist, independently, at the National Fisheries Authority that allows us to close and open seasons in respect to the beche-de-mer in that province.

Mr Speaker, we are quite happy to work with the Member for Samarai-Murua. Let's talk about issues that affect our people. Elections are over so let's focus on that and let the police and the agencies of Courts do their jobs and not on the Floor of this Parliament, thank you, Mr Speaker.

### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Motion (by **Mr James Marape**) agreed to –

That Mr Sasindran Muthuvel, Governor of West New Britain Mr William Tongamp and Mr Westly Nukundj be granted leave of absence for this Sitting of Parliament to attend to matters of election petitions.

**Mr JAMES MARAPE** – Honourable Members, I stand to adjourn Parliament because Eda Ranu is doing work along Parliament Precincts so water is not running so I seek forgiveness of Members of Parliament for not participating in the Grievance Debate.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion (by **Mr James Marape**) agreed to –

That the Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at.....