

FIRST DAY

Thursday 2 April 2020

DRAFT HANSARD

Subject:

Page No.:

URGENT CALLING OF MEETING OF PARLIAMENT – STATE OF EMERGENCY AND PRIORITY OF BUSINESS – STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER	1
BROADCASTING OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS – STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER	2
COURT OF DISPUTED RETURNS – FINAL ORDERS AND DECLARATION OF THE SUPREME COURT – GOROKA OPEN ELECTORATE – STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER	2
EXTENSION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY – COVID-19 – STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER	3
ECONOMIC UPDATE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 – STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR TREASURY	14
MOTION BY LEAVE	26
SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – ALTERATION OF HOUR OF SITTING	26
UPDATE ON COVID-19 AND PNGS RESPONSE – STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH	26
MOTION BY LEAVE	43
SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS	43
EMERGENCY (GENERAL PROVISIONS) (COVID-19) BILL 2020	43
First Reading	43
Second Reading	44
Message from the Governor-General	53
Third Reading	53
EMERGENCY (DEFENCE FORCE) (COVID-19) BILL 2020	59
First reading	59
Second Reading	59
Message from the Governor-General	59
Third Reading	59
PUBLIC HEALTH (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020	59
First reading	59
Second Reading	60
Third Reading	60
QUARANTINE (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020	61
First Reading	61
Second Reading	61
Third Reading	61
MOTION BY LEAVE	62
SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS	62
STATUTORY INSTRUMENT No.1 OF 2020 – EMERGENCY (GENERAL PROVISION) COVID-19 REGULATION 2020	62
MOTION BY LEAVE	62
SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS	63
PERMANENT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY – APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS	63
SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT	63
ADJOURNMENT	63

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
CORRECTIONS TO DAILY DRAFT HANSARD

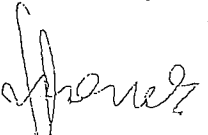
The Draft Hansard is uncorrected. It is also privileged. Members have one week from the date of this issue of Draft Hansard in which to make corrections to their speeches. Until the expiration of this one week period, Draft Hansard must not be quoted as final and accurate report of the debates of the National Parliament.

Corrections maybe marked on a photocopy of the Daily Draft Hansard and lodged at the Office of the Principal Parliamentary Reporter, A1 - 23 (next to the Security Control Room).

Corrections should be authorised by signature and contain the name, office and telephone number of the person transmitting/making corrections.

Amendments cannot be accepted over the phone.

Corrections should relate only to inaccuracies. New matters may not be introduced.


HARRY MOMOS

Acting Principal Parliamentary Reporter

FIRST DAY

Thursday 2 April 2020

The Parliament met at 2 p.m., according to *Section 124 of the Constitution* and *Section 2(1)(a)(ii) of the Organic Law on the Calling of Meetings of Parliament*.

The Speaker (**Mr Job Pomat**) took the Chair and invited the Member for Lufa, **Honourable Moriape Kavori**, to say Prayers:

‘Good afternoon na powerful God creator mi tok tenkyu long dispela apinun long session mipela kam bek na memba we yumi makim province na district mipela kam bek hia long issue bilong dispela kantri na sampela hevi i wok long kam long world na sampela samting even wok long kam long yia 2020. Papa God long Heaven olgeta sign em showim kam bek bilong yu i kam kolstu. So tete long dispela apinun mi prea na putim olgeta tingting na bel i go long han bilong yu, wanem samting we em wok long kam long narapela kantri, mipela i no laikim em bai kam long dispela kantri Papua New Guinea, mipela i Christian kantri. Papa God long Heaven salim angel long Heaven long kam lukautim olgeta banis na border bilong PNG long olgeta hap. Na sampela sik i kam rausim na blouim aut na mipela i ken stap save na lukautim pipel bilong yu long liklik hap taim. Papa mi prea long dispela apinun long blesim Prime Minister, i go long olgeta Ministers, olgeta Members long Government na Opposition tu long ol i ken discuss long issue bilong dispela even I wok long kam. Givim ol gutpela spirit na tingting na toktok ol i mekim i ken helpim olgeta PNG long savim laip bilong pipel bilong yu long liklik hap taim. Blesim Speaker long lukautim dispela session bilong mipela na givim gutpela spirit long en long bekim na tokim na answerim na tu givim mipela olgeta gutpela tingting olgeta. Mi mekim dispela prea long naispela na powerful nem bilong yu, Jisas, Amen.’

URGENT CALLING OF MEETING OF PARLIAMENT – STATE OF EMERGENCY AND PRIORITY OF BUSINESS – STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I wish to inform the Parliament that this Urgent Calling of Meeting of Parliament was called by His Excellency, the Governor-General, by virtue of the powers conferred by Section 124 of the *Constitution* and Section 2 (1) (a) (iii) of the *Organic Law on the calling of Meetings of Parliament*, and all other powers

enabling him, acting with, and in accordance with, the advice of the National Executive Council, being of the opinion that the exceptional circumstances justify the urgent recalling of Parliament to sit on 2 April, 2020, commencing at 2 p.m., to consider the emergency laws in relation to the existence of the State of Emergency relating to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic in PNG.

In accordance with the requirements of *Section 243* of the *Constitution*, all matters relating to the State of Emergency will have precedence this day.

**BROADCASTING OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS –
STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform this Parliament that the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings met today and resolved that the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) radio will be allowed to broadcast live and *NBC Kundu 2*, *EMTV* and *TV WAN* will be allowed to telecast live the whole proceeding of the urgent calling of the Parliament, this day, due to State of Emergency declared throughout the country in response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic.

**COURT OF DISPUTED RETURNS – FINAL ORDERS AND DECLARATION OF
THE SUPREME COURT – GOROKA OPEN ELECTORATE –
STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I presented the following documents relating to the National Court sitting as a Court of Disputed Returns (EP No.02 of 2017) in the matter between Mr Bire Kimisopa and Mr Henry Tutuwo Ame –

(a) On Tuesday, 7 May, 2019, the National Court Order dated 7 February, 2019, that ordered the election of the first respondent as Member for Goroka Open Electorate in the 2017 National Elections is declared absolutely void and that there will be a by-election; and

(b) On Tuesday, 28 May, 2019, the Supreme Court Review Order (SCRE No.2 of 2019) dated 9 May, 2019, that ordered that the applicant is allowed to perform the duties and

responsibilities of the seat of the Member for Goroka Open Electorate pending the determination of the substantive proceedings.

I now present the Supreme Court Review Order (SCRE No.2 of 2019) dated 3 March, 2020 that ordered that –

- (a) The application to dismiss the review is upheld;
- (b) The application for review is dismissed for failing to comply with Court Order of 3 June 2019 and for want of prosecution; and
- (c) The order for stay of 9 May, 2019, is discharged forthwith.

02/01

Now that the Supreme Court has dismissed the application to review the National Court decision of February 7, 2019, the effect, among others, is that the election of the First Respondent as Member for Goroka Open Electorate in the 2017 National Elections is absolutely void, and that a by-election be conducted.

EXTENSION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY – COVID-19 – STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr JAMES MARAPE (Tari-Pori – Prime Minister) – Mr Speaker, let me firstly thank you for allowing the House to be convened based on advice from our Head of State, consistent with recommendations from the National Executive Council upon advice by the National Security Council, on advice from the National Security Advisory Committee, and on advice from our health advisors, our Department of Health and advice from our partners which we have received in respect to the Coronavirus pandemic that has spread globally. And as we witnessed recently, our country experienced the first positive case and we needed to respond to what could have been a possible outbreak of the Coronavirus in our country which has greater implication on the security of our country, both in terms of health as well as the economy and general law and order.

Mr Speaker, firstly, I thank you for your kindness in allowing Parliament to reconvene and for your chairmanship. Secondly, let me thank every Member of Parliament on both sides of this House for turning up to respond to this national call of duty and which our country demands great attention from us in respect to what is our global consciousness on

the diversity and ravages that can be caused by uncontrolled virus or Coronavirus in particular.

Mr Speaker, today, I rise to inform the House on the continued impact of COVID-19 and the steps we are taking as a government to ensure we safeguard the interest of our people and our country.

Mr Speaker, you were aware that our government declared a State of Emergency on March 22, 2020. In line with Section 239 of the *Constitution*, the State of Emergency is due to end on Sunday, April 5, 2020.

Mr Speaker, the Government has formed the view that we need to extend the current State of Emergency for another period, more so, a period of two months.

Based on evidence, this is a necessary step to ensure that we mitigate potential harm that the spread of the virus may cause, and to allow government agencies to implement urgent and on-going measures to protect all Papua New Guineans and I repeat, all Papua New Guineans.

Mr Speaker, COVID-19 does not discriminate. It has now reached 203 countries and territories around the world and virtually no continent is left untouched. The economic and social consequence of the continual spread of the virus cannot be under-stated nor underestimated. As a nation we must act and we must maintain our resolve, firstly, to protect our country from the virus coming in; secondly, to protect our country and to stop it from spreading and thirdly, to stop it from killing our citizens.

03/01

Mr Speaker, now is not the time to become complacent or even play petty politics. Now is the time for urgent and decisive action, with support from every one of us.

Mr Speaker, COVID-19 was first declared in Wuhan, Hubei Province in China in December, 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared an outbreak on 30 January, 2020 and then they also declared a pandemic on 11 March, 2020. Over 935 189 cases worldwide as of the last update I received at 2.57 p.m. this afternoon. Of that, 47 192 deaths have occurred globally as a result of Coronavirus infection, and 194 245 have recovered and figures are improving as we speak. Tonight, by the present global trend, it is indicated that Coronavirus would have affected over a million people worldwide. There is a general trend that recovery worldwide is at 80 per cent, meaning 20 per cent of lives can be lost.

Mr Speaker, Papua New Guinea's first case was identified on 13 March, 2020; a 45-year old Caucasian male passing through Singapore to Port Moresby Domestic Terminal and transited to Nadzab where he went to a Morobe mining site. This person of interest is now in Australia recovering well. Since then tests have been carried out on 16 people who came into close contact with the suspected victim. And by the Grace of God, of the 16 tests done, none were positive. The first case has been exported out to his country of origin but this does not mean that because there is no established case in our country we must be complacent. Today there is no place for complacency since January.

I would like to commend our Health Department officials and staff, the Immigration officials at the Jacksons airport and ports and also every agency of the Government, public servants and all the volunteers that have given their time and energy to support the cause. Since January we have been able to screen 29 000 passengers who have travelled into our country to our Jacksons International Airport. Over 5 000 persons of interest were identified and of these 3 800 were cleared and 1 200 individuals continue to be monitored to ensure that they are not infected with the virus.

Mr Speaker, it is critical, given the 14-day incubation period associated with the virus, that these individuals be monitored until such time as they have been determined to not be infected. Our provincial health authorities and the Department of Health also continue to watch for any individual right across our country who may have symptoms of the virus.

Mr Speaker, despite our limitations we are trying our best to monitor our borders. Although difficult given the large stretches of the land and sea, we are doing everything that is humanly possible with the support, partnership and effective coordination of our neighbours and development partners to mitigate threats from these key entry points to PNG. And let me at this juncture make mention of my regular communication with the Australian Prime Minister and our joint effort to keep PNG safe from infected persons travelling in, whether through formal travel or informal travel through border crosses or immigrants moving between shared borders.

04/01

Mr Speaker, tonight at 8 p.m., I will be speaking with the President of Indonesia on shared concerns including asking for borders to be shut down so that Indonesia can protect the border on their side whilst we protect ours on our side.

This is to ensure no one crosses the borders; anyone caught on either side of the borders can be arrested and confined. These are important exchanges taking place to ensure that we keep our country safe from intrusion of Coronavirus into Papua New Guinea. I thank the Government and people of Indonesia and Australia. I thank you their respective prime ministers for the assistance we have received thus far.

As I speak as the Prime Minister, I cannot assure Papua New Guinea that this virus cannot reach our shores. We must ensure that the public remain informed, and that their behavior continues to change to prevent any spread of the virus taking place.

Mr Speaker, whilst indications so far remain promising, we cannot yet be rest assured that we have avoided the worst. We must continue to put in place measures to contain and limit any possible infection and protect and safeguard all Papua New Guineans. And as I speak, from modeling done by WHO and those done by our own Health Department, there are indications - as a result of the presence of Coronavirus in the region - in May and possibly in the third- quarter of the year, there can be a couple of incidences of spikes in Coronavirus if we do not continue to have stiff preventative measures put in place right from the start. That is why we are taking these measures to ensure we are free from the virus through the prevention and border protection measures to be put in place.

I apologise at this juncture to the country. The last 14 days has caused inconvenience to our people. But necessary isolation is important because this is a key step to fighting the virus from entering or spreading.

The Chinese Government has done it successfully, they have been able to let air out and contain the virus from an isolation strategy that they have deployed. And the isolation strategy that we have deployed in the last ten days and the extension that we are seeking to ensure that we keep our country in a controlled manner to ensure we continue to be sensitive and to be aware of where the virus might possibly enter the country. And for us to be defensive is important in our endeavors to ensure that we protect our country from possible intrusion and spread of the virus. This means we must continue to behave and act as though the threat remains, because the threat remains. This includes maintaining the current State of Emergency for at least two months and this is the proposal I am putting before this Honourable House to ensure that there is not one single case of COVID-19 in our country. Should the virus be detected the measures that we are putting in place will ensure that we contain this quickly and minimise harm to our local community.

05/01

Our country does not have a health system that is capable of defending our people in this time of emergency with the threat of the Coronavirus entering and spreading in our country. If a developed country like Italy which has one of the best health care systems in Europe is experiencing deaths by thousands then who is Papua New Guinea? If the most powerful country, USA, has so much deaths because they did not defend their borders then who is Papua New Guinea?

Mr Speaker, for a start, our country does not have enough doctors. We have around 500 doctors according to the figures that I have. We have under 4 000 nurses and under 3 000 community health workers. Our hospitals are rundown and only about 5 000 bed spaces. Therefore, our existing health capacity is insufficient to fight this battle. Papua New Guineans have a culture of living together in large groups.

According to the WHO, the ratio of spreading is 1:3. If a single person catches the virus then he can pass it on to three other persons and so on. I insisted that our health system model that ratio of spreading by 1:5. This is because of our way of living in groups. When the Health Department modelled that ratio they realised that our health facilities are totally inadequate to cater for such an emergency. We do not have the capacity to handle this virus if it enters and spreads in our country. We will lose thousands of people if this virus should enter our country.

Mr Speaker, this is the reason why I apologised to Members of Parliament and our people if the last ten days have caused stress on us. It is a deliberate strategy to stop movement of our people from one area to another. When we do that then we can be able to map out where exactly the virus is and allocate sufficient resources to counter its advancement.

Mr Speaker, when we come tomorrow, we will be able to indicate to the country if there is an active presence of COVID-19 or otherwise. However, as I mentioned earlier when I started there is no presence of the virus as yet but we cannot totally rely on that because we have not tested everyone who may have been exposed. We do not have information about whether testing has been done on the likely persons concerned.

The paper that will be presented by the Deputy Prime Minister will be about seeking the vote to extend the lock-down by another 2 months. This is to make sure that we live within a controlled environment. By next week Monday when the first 14 days of lock-down lapses, the Controller has the power and he has been asked to lift domestic movement. This is

movement from one town to another. Our flag carrier, Air Niugini, can fly again in the country.

However, there will be proper protocol about the movement of people within our country. For example, just like in international travel, one will be asked all details and particulars so that we take stock of people in the country to ensure we remain vigilant in our efforts to defend our country from possible intrusion and in an effort to keep Papua New Guinea free from that virus.

It will be unfair for me to say that Government effort alone has been able to contain us and thereby a virus free nation. Our Heavenly Father in Heaven has heard the prayers of Christians in our country and has allowed Papua New Guinea to be free from the virus until today. But our God is in Heaven and he has given each one of us the knowledge to do what we are supposed to do.

06/01

God has given us the knowledge and wisdom to make wise decisions. Therefore we have placed restrictions, banning unnecessary movements, public gatherings or meetings, and we have also sent out awareness teams to educate our people on basic hygiene like washing hands with soap.

These are processes we have to maintain for the next two months to remain free from coronavirus.

We remain aware of what we need to do as citizens to ensure our nation remains free from the coronavirus which is moving at full steam and ravaging nations and economies around us, including Australia and Indonesia.

So, Mr Speaker, I come here to ask this Parliament, can we maintain the current State of Emergency for at least the next two months.

As I indicated earlier, from current modelling, it indicates that the region around us will peak in as far as presence of coronavirus is concerned in May. And so for us we have a buffer of continual preparation to ensure we detect and put in place measures to contain it from spreading and also to ensure we minimise the effect of coronavirus in harming our people.

Mr Speaker, this is the right and proper course of action to take. It is consistent with the actions of other nations globally and within our region. A greater example is the containment strategy that the Chinese government deployed which today results in their trend

of coronavirus expansion being minimised if not removed; it was through an effective isolation strategy.

And while we seek to maintain the current State of Emergency for a further two months, we are realistic that the risk will remain for at least the next six months or so. But we are proposing to this House, an extension of the State of Emergency for two months so that we can take stock, put in place our containment strategy, working in partnership with the different layers of government we have, especially our provincial health authorities, provincial administrators and our PPCs in our provinces so that together we can fight this.

Mr Speaker, this is the reason why as part of being vigilant we are now starting to release funding. The balance of K45.3 million will be released immediately to ensure that our COVID-19 Response Team remains strong in their effort to fight and our government undertake a further K150 million in the short to medium term to ensure we mitigate against further risks.

These funds, Mr Speaker will go to improve our testing capacity, enhance, measures to undertake contact tracing, ensure detailed communication awareness throughout the country and ensure that we have in place containment measures should infections occur.

And, Mr Speaker, as I speak, Vanimo, Wewak, Kiunga and Wyome in Western Province will become our specific points of reference. We will build up infrastructure there for testing, containment and the presence of our security forces as well as a combined government effort to buffer the border zones in case those red zones in our country gets out of hand in the future.

Mr Speaker this is absolutely necessary given the lack of capacity our health system presently has to respond in the event that this virus gets out of hand. Containing and identifying this coronavirus is essentially important for us.

Mr Speaker, I can understand, the use of the words State of Emergency can cause anxiety and concern. I expect that in some cases it is causing families to stay apart, unable to travel freely throughout PNG or from outside into PNG but these are necessary costs to our comfort that we must take so that in the total picture we remain free from this virus, preventing deaths, protecting lives and safeguarding our combined national interest.

I ask all Papua New Guineans to cooperate and continue to adhere to these directions of the official State of Emergency that we're proposing to be continued, should this honourable House bless and sanction this afternoon.

I beg the country, please, be patient and understand the measures we are taking. This is to protect each and every one of us.

07/01

Mr Speaker, the Corona Virus has shown no respect. From ordinary persons to presidents, kings, queens, princes and princesses, everyone stands exposed to this virus.

As a small country, we have deficiencies in our system, defence of our borders and defence of the disease which is becoming our number one priority. These are the measures that we are taking.

I ask that all Papua New Guineans cooperate and continue to adhere to the directions of officials as the State of Emergency continues. Please, be patient and understand that these measures are taken is to protect you and your family and our shared future.

By working together, practicing social distancing and limiting contacts, we can ensure that in the event a case of COVID-19 does emerge again, it is quickly identified, contained and eradicated

Mr Speaker, I also understand that for many Papua New Guineans, there is fear of the economic consequences of the current crisis. As your Prime Minister, I am very much aware of this. That is why, I recently announced a range of measures that will be actioned and put in place to cushion our economy, support local businesses and sustain employment and growth.

The Treasurer will speak more on this but let me elaborate on some points. The Government is very much aware of the global economic impact of the current crisis. Our borders and many other borders have closed. The movement of goods and people have been constrained.

Economic activity has slowed, and some major industrialised economies have all but ground to a halt. We are no exception.

In the United States alone, as of today there are more than 211,000 infected individuals with more than 4,500 deaths recorded.

Globally, the number infected has now exceeded 900,000.

Mr Speaker, Papua New Guinea is not immune from this. We live in an interdependent global world. We must continue to act quickly and decisively to ensure that we protect first our people, and then our economy. Caution must be maintained.

Mr Speaker, the measures that I have announced earlier this week sought to reassure our people and the business community and demonstrate that the Government is acting.

We will soon bring before Parliament a major stimulus package of more than K5.6 billion as our initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will be part of a carefully designed Supplementary Budget that will reflect the changing and evolving economic circumstances that we face.

We will undertake a review of all tax and non-tax revenue projections and reprioritise expenditures to align with essential functions including health, education, and law and order.

At the same time, we will immediately begin to cease all non-essential expenditures. We will review the Public Investment Program to consolidate funding for firstly key and essential economic infrastructures – those that contracts have been issued out, we will defer non-essential projects, such as the NID until 2021 and re-scope and do them in a cost-effective manner.

Mr Speaker, in macro-economic terms we are already negotiating with local and external lenders to re-schedule our loan repayments, including the conversion of short term Treasury Bills to long term Inscribed Bonds.

We are also reaching out to our key bilateral and multilateral partners to source new value-based financing so we can retire expensive debt and finance our budget.

We are also consulting the Bank of Papua New Guinea to utilise monetary policy tools to support the Government's economic stimulus package. These includes undertaking a review of cash reserve requirements, which will ensure making available more money into the economy, and reviewing the Kina Facility Rate (KFR) to reduce the interest costs on borrowings by households and businesses.

08/01

Mr Speaker, I'm happy to announce that BPNG has already decreased the KFR by two per cent, which will take effect immediately. I am encouraging the commercial banks to ensure that they pass the entire two per cent savings across all borrowers, including our Small and Medium Enterprises. This will go some way to cushioning the economic impact of the crisis. Other measures taken includes reviewing foreign exchange regulations to shorten the holding of export receipts offshore to no more than three months, for surpluses to be brought into the country immediately and imposing stringent foreign exchange controls over currency trading by banks to prevent overpricing of currencies.

Mr Speaker, in the medium to long term, we intend to provide temporary tax relief as well as establish soft (near interest free) loan facility for our SMEs so that they can refinance their commercial loans or interest charges.

Already, Mr Speaker, the commercial banks have heeded to Government's request to provide three months relief by way of suspending interest payments for all their clients or borrowers.

I wish to thank all our commercial banks. I met the five Chief executive Officers of the commercial banks; BSP, Kina bank, ANZ, Westpac and the two CEOs of Super Funds. They have extended their helping hand in this time of stress. Their intervention in the market place as far as our economy is concern is very much appreciated.

I note that BSP has already extended emails and letters out to all the clients, that there will not be any repayment in the next three months and we are working very closely with them, so that government intervention in those places can ensure Papua New Guinea SMEs and business are also lightened from the burdens of these trying times.

I would like to thank them for their immediate response, and this will indeed assist with the plight of SMEs, and individual household at this difficult time.

Mr Speaker, we are also in discussion with the Super Funds to ensure those who are laid off work or disengaged at this point in time have some withdrawal abilities from their contributions to ensure they have food in the shelves of their homes to keep them going in these trying times.

Mr Speaker, the government is also looking on options selling non-core assets owned by SOEs, so we look at this policy options to find money to ensure at this point in time we have sufficient liquidity in our system.

Mr Speaker, for companies like Telikom, Air Niugini, PNG Power, we are looking at to increase efficiency by infusion of private capital into those companies, when the State do not have money to keep them running, partial privatization is the option we are looking at.

When speaking with the super funds, I have indicated to the two Super Funds for the investment in this areas as first priority for them, instead of us going offshore and these are some possibilities that we are looking at to ensure that we have life in the economy to ride out through these trying times.

Mr Speaker, our Government is in the business of supporting our people, and I asked all our people, those intervention will be making the market. Our intervention with Central Bank and the commercial banks and super funds are meant for those who are in the business with

the banks to ensure we have better lower cost financing available for our Papua New Guinea to maintain a business composure and to live out through this trying times.

Mr Speaker, as I have said, we will be working with our major commercial banks to provide short term relief to borrowers who are suffering the immediate impact of the current global crisis. These decisions are taking places and we will further advise to provide in due course.

I want to assure every citizen, whatever we are doing is to ensure our country remains composed in this trying time at this moment.

09/01

The Treasurer will present a statement this afternoon in support of what I have alluded to earlier.

Mr Speaker, I am confident that Papua New Guineans will sail out this crises together, two months is all we request for this House to approve for us to take stock of where we are in as far as this virus is concern.

In this two months, we will cause minimal disturbance to our lives, the areas of red-flag are the border areas which we will have stricter control so that rest of the country will enjoy life as we used to before. Further announcements will be made by the controller on how we will respond to situations arising within this time of State of Emergency.

I want to thank all our churches right throughout the country especially our Christians who have fasted and prayed. It will be unfair of me not to thank them, Mr Speaker, all the Christian men and women throughout the country have prayed. And not only that, the Bible is present in this House and all of us members present here were appointed by God to carry out these duties.

Inspite of our weaknesses as humans, God has allowed us to hold various offices; we the office of the Prime Minister; the office of the Opposition Leader; Ministers and Open Members and Governors. Our resources are limited but God has protected us this far.

In the next two months, I want all members who are present in this Parliament and whenever we adjourn this afternoon, I request that we must go back to our various districts and provinces especially in the month of April to take stock of all our hospitals.

Yes, I am aware that there are not enough medicines available but we are trying our best to stock it up with medicines, and that's including PPEs and all the necessary kits needed by all the health workers to protect themselves in this time of crises.

The National Government will make sure to stock up all the necessary health facilities in all the hospitals right throughout the country with necessary kits, medicines and resources.

The key control points in our provinces will be the 21 provincial response centres and not. Waigani will not be in the face of our regions and provinces doing every work. Bougainville region will be headed by their provincial setup teams. All the other 22 provincial teams will be headed by the PPC and lead by the provincial administrator and the provincial health authorities will run the show in their respective provinces.

Based on the needs of the different regions of our country, Waigani will only be responsible for allocation of resources and manpower. Hopefully in the next two months when we will take stock of what is happening globally and internally to be in a better position to decide on what we will do. But I want to assure our country that coronavirus crises creates an opportunity for us to make greater intervention in the health care of our people.

And it also gives us an opportunity to relook at priorities. As a government we had many priorities since we gained independence in 1975. This crises creates an opportunity for us to reconsider the way government priorities are placed. One thing that is obvious is that, the health of our people is directly linked to the health of our economy. We should work these two matters hand-in-hand as we move into the future.

With this Mr Speaker, I kindly recommend to this House that we extend State of Emergency with a greater freedom of movement but power vested in the controller for the next two months as we continue our efforts to protect our country against the virus from coming into our country externally through our borders and also internally from local transmission it does enters our country, thank you Mr Speaker.

ECONOMIC UPDATE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 – STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR TREASURY

Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY (Kavieng – Minister for Treasury) – Thank you, Mr Speaker.

In this most difficult of times, facing one of the gravest threats to the future of our people, I wish to provide the Parliament with an economic update.

10/01

This update will cover the current best estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on the national economy, the Marape-Steven Government's Principles for responding to the crisis, and then details of a K5.6 billion economic stimulus package. I repeat, a smart, innovative, caring, responsive K5.6 billion, or K5, 600 million, economic stimulus package, by far the largest in our nation's history.

Mr Speaker, when addressing this House on 19 February, only six weeks ago, I made mention that the coronavirus spreading in Wuhan in China would have adverse impacts on the PNG economy, but that we did not know how large these would be because of many, many uncertainties.

Now, we know the coronavirus, now generally called C19, was not contained in China. We read every day in our press how COVID19 spread from China and is now in over 200 countries. We hear of increasing stories of hospital systems being over-run, overwhelmed in advanced countries such as Spain and Italy.

On Tuesday, we heard the US President estimating that the death toll in the United States is likely to be between 100, 000 and 240, 000 deaths even with the social distancing measures that have been put in place including closing schools, limiting travel and forcing people to stay in their homes.

Mr Speaker, responding to COVID-9 is literally a matter of life or death. We are at war. This is a global war – all of us against an invisible enemy that has no army, no guns and bullets, no spears and does not sleep!

What are some of the international impacts so far? Even six weeks ago, we were starting to see the Chinese COVID-19 outbreak having impacts on the global economy. Commodity prices were falling. Global supply chains were being affected.

These impacts are worse than expected, in part due to the extraordinary drop in oil prices. And as we all now know, a fall in oil prices will lead to a fall in LNG prices, and of course PNG's key exports.

Mr Speaker, a team of local and international experts have been estimating the economic impacts of the COVID-19 on the PNG economy. The economic modelling is difficult because we have not had an economic crisis of such complexity or magnitude since World War II. So there are many uncertainties.

The best estimate from this team is that the value of our exports will fall by at least 13 per cent as our exports were estimated to total K42 billion in 2020. This means the value of

our exports are estimated to fall by over K5 billion. This means lower incomes for mineral companies, but also lower incomes for many of our rural households. It also means that there is over K5 billion less foreign exchange being earned. These external impacts will also reduce our revenues, including our resource revenues.

In broader terms, we expect to lose around K1 billion in revenues because of these external impacts. This is bad news.

Mr Speaker, for those scientists that do the numbers on the likely impacts of sick people and deaths in any country, one of the key factors is how quickly a country responds to the threat. The models show dramatic differences between a country that acts early when there are no or only a few deaths, and those countries that wait a week too long.

11/01

PNG is fortunate because it has acted early. We have had the leadership of our Prime Minister to close down our borders with only one reported case, and no known deaths. This is an absolutely vital step in winning this war against COVID-19.

The Government knows that closing our borders, stopping the movement of people, has serious economic impacts.

We can all see the slowdown is having dramatic impacts on tourist facilities, airlines and markets. There are reports of looting in some areas, driven on occasions by increasing hunger from workers laid off jobs.

Mr Speaker, preliminary economic modelling indicates that PNG's economic growth rate is likely to fall to below zero this year. COVID-19 will push PNG into a recession, driven by the fall in world growth as well as the impacts of shut-down measures on tourism, retail trade and other parts of our economy. This modelling is likely to be conservative - economic models are not designed to deal with such a complex economic shock with so many impacts as COVID-19.

The slowdown in growth and people losing their jobs will lower personal income tax, company income tax and GST collections.

The domestic impacts are expected to reduce our budget revenues by a further K1 000 million on top of the external impacts of another K1 000 million.

So overall, we estimate the total fall will be K2 000 million. This K2 000 million drop in revenue would add to our already record budget deficit of K4 631 million. The starting point because of COVID-19 is that the budget deficit could increase to K6 631 million. This

is before any new spending to respond to the crisis. This is the starting point. What a difficult starting point!

Smart economic stimulus options

Mr Speaker, the question is: how does the Marape-Steven Government respond to such an extraordinary, war-like, economic emergency?

An unsophisticated and dangerous approach would be to just spend big from our Budget to stimulate the economy - which is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition has been advocating! However, the economic legacy from economic mismanagement means that we already have the largest deficit in our nation's history of K4, 631 million. Wouldn't it be nice to have a budget surplus based on the success of the PNG LNG project! But that is not our starting point.

The loss of K2 000 million in revenues and possibly more means that the starting point when thinking of how to respond is K6 631 million.

We must be careful and not only think about today, but also think about the impacts of simply spending more and more, building our debt more and more, leaving more and more of a debt burden which our children will have to pay for.

It would be irresponsible to do this without exploring thoroughly all other options.

So what do we do instead? There is a smarter response. Rather than just focusing on the budget, we can use other economic tools available to government. These are monetary policy and regulatory policies including superannuation. The positive links we have now built with the international community can be leveraged.

Mr Speaker, today I will set out six smart components of our response. Some increased expenditure is required but it is less than one-tenth of the entire economic stimulus package being presented today.

But before moving to the details of our economic stimulus package, let me set out the broad principles we are applying to our response.

12/01

The Marape-Steven Government recognizes the COVID-19 pandemic health emergency will create an economic emergency, a smart innovative, caring and responsive approach is required to build our country's economic resilience.

Our government is not going to sit and wait for things to become a problem before reacting. We are proposing a package of actions to help support business activities during this critical time to protect jobs and to ensure that needed investments still continue.

This economic stimulus package is based on five principles. The first will be a PNG-owned and driven response. It will be designed to take advantage or to advance the 'Take back PNG' agenda. It will be coordinated, including budget and monetary policies, business to business support, procurement policies and regulations.

It will recognize the cash, the foreign exchange, the budget management, the private sector and the household elements of a sensible nimble-meaning clever and flexible risk response.

Mr Speaker, it will include a vision for the future, using this crisis as a way to reshape our society into one that is fairer, united and more inclusive.

The second principle is that the response will be broad and comprehensive. It will cover households both in rural and urban areas. It will cover businesses both small and big, formal and informal. And it will be inclusive, not just the big end of the town, it will be also the small end of the rural village, covering our mothers and fathers and our children, no matter where they live. This will be tough as we do not have the delivery mechanisms of the advanced countries but we will work very hard to get support out to where it is needed, no matter where that need.

Mr Speaker, the third principle is that the response will be smart and forward looking. There will be a focus on practical projects that build our economic capacity. Our public investment program will be focused on projects ready to go. Procurement arrangements will be streamlined to allow early commencement of activities.

Mr Speaker, the fourth principle is that the response will be responsible. Years of economic mismanagement has limited our scope to move in this emergency. The massive build up in expensive debts mainly for budget deficits rather than investments means that PNG is already on the verge of being classified as high debt risk country.

Once again; wouldn't it be nice if the starting position now to respond to the COVID-19 war was a budget surplus. But this is not our economic legacy. This must be very carefully managed. Most other countries have more budget rooms for maneuver. We will require sensible cut backs in areas such as the census, international travels and meetings, and redirect funds to priority areas of health and security. We will rely primarily on monetary policy options including quantitative easing, as well as regulatory actions such as on our

superannuation to deliver our objectives. Ninety per cent of our economic stimulus response to date is based on flexible use of these other options.

The fifth and the final principle is that the response will draw on friendly foreign support. Our positive re-engagement with the international community led through the recent IMF staff monitored program has opened several doors. For all of our critics working with the new IMF, it is time to reflect on your old-fashioned views.

13/01

I know the old IMF and I did not like it. The new IMF is so much better. The global financial crisis woke them up as they had to bail out countries such as Ireland and Iceland, they learned more about how to support economies rather than all too often undermining economies.

Mr Speaker, let me set out the benefits of keeping an open mind and being forward looking, removing our old biases and working openly with the world that is. Our work with the IMF has already allowed us to apply for K630 million (\$US182 million) last week in extremely concessional terms. This is good, cheap financing. Not over 8 per cent interest costs for a sovereign bond. But 1 per cent. This dramatically lowers the interest costs of our borrowings.

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to announce I have been informed yesterday morning that we can now apply for another K630 million from the IMF this year; a total of K1,260 million or K1.2 billion in 2020. And we have been told we can ask for the same amount again in 2021. So the critics say, 'a nasty, old IMF'. I say now a good friend - still a bit cautious given my experiences back in 2000, but I really am thinking they are a friend which has stepped up enormously at this time of COVID-19 crisis.

Taking a big picture, they have always been about supporting our own economic reform program. Sure, they may focus on some areas more than us, but they are backing the economic reform objectives of the Marape-Steven Government. So what does the IMF say about the drop of K2 000 million in revenue? Do they say that you have to keep within your old deficit? No, they don't. They understand that the world is at a global war. They say we understand that your deficit is likely to go to K6.5 billion up from K4.631 billion by far the largest in our country's history. And even with such an increase in the deficit, the IMF will work with us to provide K1 260 million this year, and another K1 260 million next year. Highly concessional funds with an interest rate of something like one per cent and years

before having to repay any principle. Come on all you social media warriors complaining about the IMF! Give them a break! And come on those critics within this Parliament! Look and learn from what is actually happening.

We have an economic reform program and we remain absolutely committed to economic reform. The specific targets in this reform program will have to adjust because of the COVID-19 war. For example, we have lost K2 billion in revenues, so our revenue targets for this year will not be met. The IMF is supporting our economic reform program and I am confident that they will adjust with us based on the discussions and meetings that we continue to have with them on regular daily basis. The bottom line is that the Marape-Steven Government will always pursue the national interests of PNG.

Mr Speaker, the IMF's financing support is part of a much wider program of support from the international community. The World Bank is providing K70 million (\$US20 million) in medical supplies assistance and the Asian Development Bank K170 million (\$US50 million) in health program support. Other donors are adjusting their programs to respond to C-19.

14/01

We are also exploring debt relief from all our creditors – multilateral and bilateral and have helped initiate discussions at the highest global levels on such support.

PNG – leading the world in responses to this COVID-19 crisis.

Security

Mr Speaker, to support these five principles, we understand that their effectiveness also relies on effective coordination with other COVID-19 security actions

Security is already clearly a major issue. Fear of the Coronavirus and inappropriate responses to the lockdown highlight the risks of social disorder leading to widespread looting and other attacks on key economic assets.

Mr Speaker, a key element of the national response is ensuring the safety of businesses, of banks and key supply chains such as power, water, telecommunications and transport. And on a broader view of security, we must work to lower other costs that will be driven by fear. Fear is almost as big an enemy as the virus itself. This will extend to medical messages that this is a virus, and not sorcery. We are a Christian nation. If the virus escapes into PNG, and bears its inevitable medical consequences, there is no room for fear based around sorcery.

The COVID-19 response also means livelihood patterns are disrupted. Wives and husbands may not get the incomes from markets and work that were once expected. This adds to tension in households. We must understand these pressures. We must love each other. This is a time for understanding, not for domestic violence.

Details of K5.6 billion Economic Stimulus Package.

Mr Speaker, as the Treasurer in the Marape-Steven Government, I am proud to announce the largest economic stimulus package in PNG's history - K5, 600 million (K5.6 billion). Ninety per cent of this is funded through innovative, flexible mechanisms, not just big government spending, and looking at other options using the full powers of government especially when we are at a war-like setting. While already the largest economic stimulus in our history, we will do more, if we need to do more. If this COVID-19 war goes on for many months rather than a few months, we will do more. For example, our work on repayment holidays on loans is valued at K600 million for 3 months. If the crisis continues for six months, the support will be an extra K600 million. Nimble and responsive.

Mr Speaker, the first and largest element of our economic stimulus package is K2.5 billion issuance of COVID-19 Treasury Bonds. Our 2020 Budget financing plan is being undermined by COVID19. The impacts of this were very clear during March — normal domestic financing options simply were not working. We were not getting the cash to support our vital hospitals and care centres. Although we had allocated an immediate K45 million in a COVID-19 response, we simply were not getting the cash and it was very, very hard to get the required funds.

Mr Speaker, frankly, this is intolerable. We must be able to get the kina to fund urgent priorities. Currently, we have had the cash to fund less than 10 per cent of our budget (outside of wages and interest costs). We should be at least 25 per cent of such expenditure, instead we are at less than 10 per cent at this time, but we intend to address this this in coming weeks and months. Our development budget and health budget are suffering, but we intend to also address this issue.

So what do we do? We are going to market hard for K2.5 billion in domestic financing.

15/01

There will be an offer of at least K1 billion as early as next week. We need this cash now. We are talking to the banks, superannuation funds and others to support this cash fund-raising. But we also understand that things are very tight for them.

As a fallback, and it is just a fallback, we will support this through what is known as quantitative easing implemented by the Bank of PNG. This is what many other countries are doing – including the Australian and US central banks. In good times, this is not something a country should do. In these times of war against COVID-19, it is a feasible, responsible option. The likelihood of inflation is small when the economy is being pushed into a recession. So K2 500 million in cash raisings over the next four months to support our urgent actions to support health, security and development in our country.

Mr Speaker, the second part of our package K0.6 billion of support for loan repayment holidays. We know that households and businesses are doing it hard.

How do you pay your mortgage when you've lost your job or your business?

If your sales have collapsed, how do you ask your bank to support your overdraft?

We welcome the very constructive support of our banks in indicating that various forms of mortgage repayment holidays are available for up to three months. But we expect them to go a little bit more.

All of these actions by our banks and finance companies are supported by quantitative easing options from our central bank – BPNG. So being conservative, we estimate the backstop support for our private banks to provide these tax holidays is conservatively estimated at something less than the K754 million based on current borrowings and average interest costs – so we have allowed for K600 million.

This is a conservative estimate based on these tax holidays only being in place for three months.

If the lockdowns and COVID-19 war continue for longer, then we will provide this support for longer. We want households and businesses to be in a position to quickly re-emerge from this crisis.

Third, K1.5 billion in friendly foreign assistance. I have actually provided the details earlier. K1 260 million from the IMF; K170 million from the Asian Development Bank; K70 million from the World Bank. I am working hard to ensure more is coming. Our tax revenues have collapsed. I am working hard to try and fill this gap with cheap financing.

Fourth, K0.5 billion in superannuation measures. This is part of our smart thinking. When looking at available resources to support the COVID-19 war, I have looked beyond just the Budget. I have looked beyond the quantitative easing measures from the central bank. One of the great assets of PNG is our very sensible superannuation arrangements. These savings total about K14 billion. This part of the Economic Stimulus Package is about using some of these savings now.

You save for a rainy day. Now is more than a rainy day – it is a cyclone.

16/01

This part of the Economic Stimulus Package is about using some of these savings now. And the industry can be assured we will continue with our consultative process so that we are all in this together. You save for a rainy day. Now is more than a rainy day– it is a cyclone.

We should use some of these retirement savings to support people in this cyclone. We need to ask the question if we should continue saving over the time of the C19 cyclone or is it better use of money to support the economy? In talking to the superannuation funds, we had some ideas. Rather than imposing them through changes in legislation, we have asked them to come back with a package of activities worth K500 million to support jobs, businesses and investment. A likely element of this would be enhanced early access for people who lose their jobs. We look forward to the suggestions from the superannuation industry on how best to use K0.5 million of superannuation funds. And of course, if the COVID-19 war goes on and on, we will ask them for more options.

Fifth, we will spend an extra K500 million as a direct budget response to the critical health, security and economic sectors. So this direct budget financing is less than 10 per cent of our total economic stimulus response package of K5.6 billion.

In line with the principles of our response, a responsible response, K250 million of this funding will be directed at the health and security response. Specifically, there will be an extra K175 million for health, K50 million extra for police and K25 million extra for the defence forces. These numbers are gross numbers at this time and may be adjusted dependent on further discussions with each of these sectors.

The health support of K175 million is nearly four times the initial request for health funding of K45.5 million. A massive increase in support.

On top of the K175 million domestic funding increase is an extra K70 million for medical supplies and other support to the health sector from the World Bank. And on top of

that again is additional grant aid support from donors, such as much of the K50 million (AUD\$ 20.5 million) recently announced by Australia. So a quarter of a billion extra to re-enforce our health response effort. If more is needed, we will do more.

The other K250 million of our domestic budget response is to directly support the rural sector, jobs, micro, small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) and households. The specific details of these support measures will be announced shortly after careful consultations within Government.

Sixth, we need to start preparations for a Supplementary Budget. I have asked the Central Agencies Coordinating Committee (a committee of the Secretaries of key government departments) to do a thorough review of our budget. We need to find budget cuts to finance the increased needs of the health, security and economic sectors. Currently, given the drop in revenues of K2, 000 million, the increase in direct budget expenditure of K500 million and the extra K70 million in World Bank, we have K2, 570 million in pressures to increase the 2020 budget deficit. We currently have K1, 500 million in available additional friendly financing. The difference between these two amounts is K1, 070 million. This is the starting point for the CACC to find budget savings.

17/01

We have given them a four-week period to complete this exercise. Some items such as the planned 2020 Census clearly needs to be deferred until after the COVID-19 war, as announced by the Prime Minister. This is because we don't want census collectors visiting remote communities to potentially pass on any virus at this time. Clearly, international travel and other costs are falling. The CACC will go through and provide recommendations for a Supplementary Budget.

When doing this, the focus will be on supporting the take back PNG agenda. We want to protect vital activities such as the PNG Connect initiative. We will look to advance rapidly existing projects. We will consider activities that can rapidly get support out to our rural communities and settlements. We will be responsive, innovative and caring in our responses.

Mr Speaker, in addition to this package of six comprehensive actions, our economic response to COVID-19 includes items that do not have a specific cost but are vital.

For example, we have been working with the Independent Consumer and Competition Commission (ICCC) to control the prices of essential commodities. We will continue actions in this area and there will be more announcements in coming days.

Another example is our work with the IRC to defer the timing of a broad range of tax payments. Helping business and household cash flow in a wise way but without a cost to 2020 revenues.

We are also working across all levels of government, Governors and members are also directing their resources towards the war on COVID-19. This truly is a national effort.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, our nation faces a very grave danger.

By acting early, by shutting down our borders such that we do not even have a single known case of COVID-19 currently in our country, we have been given a chance.

This is a tricky virus. There are still risks of it coming through one of our borders especially through the illegal movement of people. But we have a chance because of the way our Prime Minister has acted.

Mr Speaker, this Government understands that creating this positive chance through a strong lock-down has a significant economic cost. It means that our mothers and fathers are finding it hard to take their goods to market. It means that prices for many items are starting to go up. It means that people have lost jobs. It means that many businesses are struggling to pay bills. It means that we are worried about our loved ones but can no longer travel and want to talk to them for longer.

Mr Speaker, the Marape-Steven's Government understands these pressures. It is responding with an economic stimulus package. It is responding with an economic stimulus package of K5, 600 million. This is by far the largest stimulus package in our history. Why? Because our country, not in all the years since Independence in 1975, has this country faced such challenging economic times.

Mr Speaker, we are a resilient people. We will work our way through this crisis.

We will not only get through, we will use it as an opportunity. We will use it as an opportunity to build a better PNG.

We will use it as an opportunity to build a more caring PNG.

We will use it as an opportunity to make it a more inclusive PNG.

The Marape-Steven Government, nimble, clever, responsive, caring-with a vision for PNG as we emerge, and, we will emerge, from this COVID-19 war.

Thankyou Mr Speaker, my parliamentary colleagues and the people of this great country of ours.

18/01

MOTION BY LEAVE

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschaffen – Minister for Finance) – I ask the leave of the Parliament to move a motion without notice.

Leave granted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – ALTERATION OF HOUR OF SITTING

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent:

- (a) Parliament sitting beyond 5 p.m. and
- (b) that the Parliament be adjourning on a motion to be moved by Minister at any time.

UPDATE ON COVID-19 AND PNGS RESPONSE – STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH

Mr JELTA WONG (Gazelle – Minister for Health) – Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to make a statement to update this House on Convid-19 and PNG's response.

Mr Speaker, and Honourable Members of the Parliament, the purposes of this statement is firstly to update the House and the Nation on the current status of the pandemic of COVID-19 and global menace it is causing and secondly to advise the House on the Government of PNG's response to this dreadful pandemic.

The last time this House met, I presented to the House a statement on the health sectors and Government partners' preparedness. At that time World Health Organisation (WHO) only declared COVID-19 as a public health emergency of international concern.

Since then WHO has declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2020, the number of cases were merely over hundred and ten thousand and over 100 countries reporting cases. Since then, the number of cases globally has increased almost eight times and over 200 countries and territories have reported cases.

Mr Speaker, the rate of infection is such that, when I finish this statement, there will be more than 500 new cases reported around the world. Worldwide people are comparing this pandemic as the 1918 pandemic of Spanish Flu.

On 20 March 2020, Papua New Guinea announced its first confirmed imported COVID-19 case in a traveller who arrived in PNG on 13 March. This detection has now pushed PNG into the containment phase of its response. However, technically speaking, we now have had no case in the country as traveller "Z" has been sent back to his own country.

Mr Speaker, and Honourable Members of this House, as you know, on 22 March, Prime Minister Marape and the Cabinet advised the Governor General to declare a 'State of Emergency' (SOE) for 14 days for the entire country starting on the 24th March.

The Commissioner for Police, Mr David Manning has been appointed as the SOE Controller. Commissioner Manning has assumed control of the SOE assisted by a call-out placed on military personnel to ensure lawful order, control and response to SOE control measures.

Mr Speaker, it was also on the 24 March, that we set up the Joint Agency Task Force National Operation Centre (JATFNOC-19) at the Morauta Haus Building. This also include the setting up of the 24/7 COVID-19 Call Centre with support from Saint Johns Ambulance, Telikom and Digicel.

Mr Speaker, allow me to inform this historic House some of the measures we have taken regarding the SOE. Some Regulations were gazetted on the 26 March 2020 to be effected through this Parliament.

19/01

Specific Orders of the SOE have been generated and endorsed to detail how the Controller will implement the SOE across the country. The orders include specific restrictions and allowances for:

- the movement of people, focussing mainly on health workers and businesses,
- designated ports of entry, as Jackson's Airport and Maritime ports of Motukea in Port Moresby, Lae, Rabaul and Madang.

- appointment of authorized officers in implementing the SOE regulations and orders of the controller,
- international border patrols,
- domestic and international travel,
- provincial functions in the SOE,
- public and private employment during the SOE,
- essential services, such as public utilities, during the SOE,
- social gatherings, and
- any other control measures that may be determined by the provinces which are not specified in the orders, such as curfews. These are tabled to this Honourable House for the consideration.

Honourable Members of the House and Mr Speaker, please let me now update you on the Health Sector Response we have done till now.

To date we have screened close to thirty thousand (30,000) inbound passengers at the points of entry at the Jackson's International Airport and seaports in Port Moresby. The health team has identified 6,431 'persons of interest' (POI) and are being monitored regularly by the surveillance team for 14 days. More than two-thirds of these people have completed 14 days incubation period and cleared as negative.

In total 94 people has been tested with 1 positive result, 86 negative and 7 still pending completion of testing. Testing facility developed at Institute of Medical Research now can conduct 300 tests a day. From Wednesday, 1 April, the MLR Testing Laboratory within UPNG Medical School is ready to perform tests for ease of logistics. That will improve our capacity to conduct additional tests on 200 samples a day. We are also establishing other testing facilities in Madang and strategically in Vanimom and Daru.

The National Department of Health (NDoH) is working on implementing control measures and building its preparedness concurrently. Important tasks of contact tracing and testing is ongoing during the lock down period and it will allow for that work to be completed and checked.

There are still many POI to be followed up on and given the 14-day incubation period. Current capacity building in health facilities, PHAs and communities for the worst-case scenario is important. It is expected that the containment and potential mitigation phase for at least another six (6) months from the time of the imported case, to localized transmission and

to large scale transmission. Mitigation is already happening in our immediate neighbours Australia and Indonesia; it is important PNG stays vigilant.

Mr Speaker, anecdotal evidences from many countries suggests that ineffective containment measures and uncontrolled movement in densely populated cities have increased infection rates. Thus, the potential threat over the coming months remains high in PNG and our control measures applied to the entire nation must remain. Effective implementation of the control measures will create a stable environment should any escalation occur. It will also ensure that there is a clear line of authority and direction in managing the risks of community transmission and possible further imported cases. The prolonged period of the State of Emergency will allow our preparedness to be built up with supporting enforcement of control measures by the PNGDF, RPNGC and other authorized personnel.

Honourable Members of the House, please let me emphasise that in the event there is community transmission detected in PNG, it is envisioned that the initial outbreak in urban areas and will overwhelm health system in about May to July but will be delayed until about November for rural areas. Considering the trend seen in other countries, PNG may face shortfalls of between 1, 000 to 30, 000 hospital beds over the next year.

Mr Speaker, worldwide people are promoting social distancing measures which will reduce the number of cases. Let me emphasise, I request for physical distancing and will reduce transmission. As leaders of the community, I requested all the Honourable Members to show example by practising the physical distancing.

Mr Speaker, let me be frank and open, thousands of deaths may occur across the provinces should there be an outbreak of COVID-19. It is important to continue upscaling of critical essential health programs to avoid further stress on current health systems. For example, during Ebola in West Africa there were more maternal deaths than Ebola deaths as the health system was unable to look after anything else.

20/01

On a positive note, let me inform the House that we have an isolation ward ready at the Port Moresby General Hospital and we are transforming the Rita Flynn Netball Courts to another isolation unit. We are in the process of procuring 30 tents through funding from DFAT Australia, which will be used as screening facilities at hospitals nationwide. And we are expecting United Nations in PNG to assist in providing ventilators for the isolation facilities in NCD as well as the provincial hospitals.

Mr Speaker, personal protective equipment or known as PPE is a high priority item, particularly for frontline health workers' safety as well as for the safety of other sectors such as staff handling incoming people.

Last week, the PNG Nurses Association raised concerns on their availability. Those concerns have been quelled and to date we have received PPE from DFAT, WHO UNICEF and other private sectors. The Department of Health has also procured and procuring TPPE in the wake of global demands and shortage of PPE. The three items are of importance; the mask, the gloves, goggles and gowns are immediately needed in large quantities over the next six months, including requesting our international partners and outsourcing to private suppliers worldwide.

Mr Speaker, and Honourable Members of this House, I have to acknowledge that our health system has limited capacity experience and resource to manage the large-scale response, making the risk of spread as high in the event the outbreak of COVI-19 occurs in PNG.

Let me re-iterate, health is about life from the womb to the tomb. From the highly technical complex and expressive health services that a deliver from a network of 2,608 health facilities, ranging from a one-person aid post to huge hospital like Port Moresby General Hospital. The Health system requires adequate funding, readily available always to deliver services and to save lives.

And I am thankful to the current government, our government for giving priority to health. But let me tell you that no money is enough for health. Because we provide direct life saving services to our people and in situations like this, we need more.

Let me thank and commend our Prime Minister and the NEC for appropriating money for the implementation of the COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan. Let me assure my colleagues that we will be judicious in spending this budget however, we will need much more.

Mr Speaker, through this House, I want to congratulate, the tireless frontline, health and other sector workers who are working to keep our country free from the threat and I would like to thank the citizens of PNG for abiding by the directives of the SOE despite many problems in our personal lives. Let me offer our gratitude to our partners like Australia, China, New Zealand, Korea as well as our development partners from ADB, World Bank, UNICEF and others who have been supporting Papua New Guinea through financial assistances as well as key commodities, including the precious PPEs.

I also extend my appreciation to the private sector citizens and the corporate citizens for coming forward and providing assistance and support for the overall efforts of the government thus far. These include, Air Niugini, Telikom, Digicel, Kumul Consolidated Holdings, EMTV, Oil Search, Hevi-Lift, the media and many others.

It is our government's plan to foster effective partnership and collaboration to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in a massive response on operations of such magnitude. This brings us to fully align with the United Nations plea for the whole societies approach to combat global problems like COVID-19.

21/01

Finally, Mr Speaker, we all want to protect ourselves and our families from this pandemic but fear can do more harm than the virus. It can make us panic or do things which can make matters worse; such as circulating rumours online or blaming particular groups for the outbreak.

Mr Speaker, can I, through this House, once again remind the general public of their role in minimising the risk through the following key five messages;

1. Wash your hands often;
2. Cough into your elbow;
3. Don't touch your face;
4. Keep a safe distance from others; and,
5. Simply stay at home.

Remember the virus doesn't move unless people move it. When we stop moving the virus stops moving. Fear and anxiety are natural human reactions.

Mr Speaker, at the end, I acknowledge the support of the leaders, the private sector, the NGOs, and the Governors but will continue to seek further support from all of them and you. God Bless Papua New Guinea.

Mr BELDEN NAMAH (Vanimu-Green – Leader of the Opposition) – I move –

That the Parliament take note of the statements by the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Minister for Health.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition, we thank the Government for hearing our call to re-call Parliament and for you to convene this emergency session to discuss matters of

great importance concerning our country. This Parliament session is for us to debate the State Of Emergency with the possibility of enacting the *Emergency Act*, its regulation and the Orders that come with it.

Mr Speaker, it will go down in the history of our nation that this is the first-ever national State Of Emergency that involves the entire country. As we meet today, around the world people are dying from the Coronavirus pandemic. I do not wish to go through the statistics that the Prime Minister has already informed Parliament but the fact is, it is a serious global crisis that Papua New Guinea must react. Many countries around the world are on emergency footing. This is why we are here in this emergency meeting. But why do we agree on it? How will our deliberations today impact the lives of over 8 million people?

In our deliberations today, we must remove all pretensions to knowledge we have, all showmanship, all political, self and parochial interests. What we notice in recent weeks is that some of our politicians have become judges, lawyers, doctors, nurses and even scientists. Some ministers have become ministers of ministers.

Mr Speaker, there is no clear chain of command as to addressing this issue. There is no clear channel of communication. There has been misleading information given by the Government. For example, one minister will be saying that test results are positive whilst the other will be saying it is negative. The third one will be telling us that they are still assessing the results.

Mr Speaker, what needs to be cleared here is that channel of communication and the chain of command by the Government. We cannot have ministers –

Mr Jelta Wong – Point of Order! Just to correct the good Opposition Leader, the news coming out was done in the right way. There were cases where we had probable and non-probable situations and that is why it came out like that. We only have one Prime Minister in this country who is Honourable James Marape!

Mr BELDAN NAMAHA – I must have pressed the wrong button.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr BELDAN NAMAHA – Mr Speaker, the issue is that there is no communication. We are hearing from the Minister for Police and then the Minister for Health. Our communication must be clear towards our people and this is what I am getting at.

22/01

The issue here, Mr Speaker, is not Coronavirus, the issue is the cause of the virus. We are not scientists to discuss what this virus is all about. We are not doctors to prescribe its medication.

Mr Speaker, the issue before us is the national State of Emergency and that the Government has declared its response to the Coronavirus pandemic in the country.

We in the Opposition agree with the national State of Emergency. Indeed we have been calling for it, but we believe declaring a State of Emergency for two months is too long.

Yes, it requires a national response. We agree with the Government. We agree too with the recalling of Parliament to give effect to the *Emergency Act*, its Orders and Regulations.

Mr Speaker, how do we go forward with the State of Emergency from here? Under what regulations, operational orders and methods do we proceed? These are the things we should discuss and debate on this Floor. Our people need to know.

We have called on the Government to ban all international flights. We did not call on the Government to stop domestic flights. We are a country where the only mean of transportation is by air. Most of our travellers travel by air. We are not a country that is connected by roads. Our sea transport is limited. Our people are being grossly affected.

This is a first for our country, this is a first for the leaders sitting here today. How do we address this issue? We need correct results from the Health Department. The Health Department must continue to function. We should not be deviating from this coronavirus issue. Every department must continue to function. We must put together a response team.

To us in the Opposition the issues are four-fold. First, is the prevention, second is the response, prevention and containment of any coronavirus victims, third is response to a wider socio-economic impact and the fourth is a test of Papua New Guinea's independent spirit. How do we, as a country, respond to this emergency?

Mr Speaker, prevention is the most important issue before us. The Government has been very slow in its reaction towards shutting down the borders. You do not have to shut down the entire country. You just have to identify the hotspots in the country. Go to your

Morauta House or Pineapple Building, secure an office, put your team together, put a PNG map and identify the hotspots in the country.

Mr Pila Niningi – Point of Order! How do we shut out those people who travelled into the country with the infected person? How do you contain them? That's the problem. Therefore, this Government had effectively taken control of the situation. And by the time 14 days are up, we have effectively controlled it.

Mr BELDEN NAMAHA – That's the very point. Why two months when your Prime Minister is saying that the tests came out negative.

So, are you a scientist to tell us this? That is why you have to have a war-room where you have to have to identify the major hotspots, especially the borders because it is an imported disease.

23/01

It is not something that is within our country so we must safeguard the borders. We are now trying to deploy 30 soldiers to Vanimo but that is not enough. We need to beef-up all the troops along the border because there are so many illegal smuggling and trade taking place. This is where we will attract the virus to come through our borders.

Your hotspots should be Western Province, West Sepik Province, and of course Vanimo-Green, but whose responsibility is it? It is the National Government's responsibility to man the borders.

(Government Members interjecting)

Mr BELDEN NAMAHA - It is the National Government's responsibility. You need to tighten up your sea borders in Milne Bay, Manus and Bougainville but you are not doing it.

Mr Westly Nukundj – Point of Order! The assumption by the Leader of the Opposition that the Government has not responded to the restrictions along the borders is wrong. The Opposition made a late call but the Government made a call as early as 28 February, 2020, on all the ports, so his assumption is wrong.

Mr BELDEN NAMAH – Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Minister for Immigration does not know what he is talking about because if there are restrictions in place and government presence on the border, why are there still illegal border crossings?

Mr Westly Nukundj – Point of Order! Mr Speaker, I know exactly what I am talking about because I have been to Bewani to open the Border Patrol Post and I have never seen the presence of the Opposition Leader himself. So I know exactly what I am saying.

(Members applauding)

Mr BELDEN NAMAH – He does not know what he is saying because there is no Government presence on the border and that is a fact. You have not been there recently so do not mislead Parliament.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr Westly Nukundj – Point of Order! -

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, the issue now on the Floor is very important to all of us so I want to remind us all to debate specifically on the issue because the virus is a very serious threat to us all, therefore, debate should not be personalised.

Mr BELDEN NAMAH – Mr Speaker, we are not talking about Malaria or TB; this is a very deadly disease and we need to shut down all the borders if it means for us to have heavy police or military presence in the common borders that we have. The one case we had was imported. You were supposed to shut down all the flights when that flight came in with the imported case. That is my point. So don't raise unnecessary points of order. Sometimes, you must accept criticism, it may be good for you, Minister!

Mr Speaker, we must act together as a country to ensure that we prevent this disease from spreading throughout our country. The strictest test and requirements must be brought in for crucial shipping and air transportation especially international. This is our first and last line of defence.

Our second point is that should a case be confirmed like what we have in Lae, we must be prepared to condone off and quarantine the entire blocks. If we are still doing it, we have to find out the identities of the passengers that travelled with the victim.

(Members interjecting)

24/01

You have already done it, but some of them are trying to become scientists announcing results that are negative then another person says positive. That is the problem.

Mr Speaker, my point here is, when we are making statements, we allow those that are qualified to make those statements, especially in such times.

Mr Speaker, if it means that you have to do a Cabinet reshuffle and appoint a doctor to be health Minister, you do that. If that Member of Parliament is a professional doctor, he will be able to speak in terms of the disease that we have in this country. You need to allow a medical practitioner to explain. If you are just a Member of Parliament or Minister trying to explain, you confuse yourself and confuse the entire country. That is the point, and we should not come here and pretend.

Mr Bryan Kramer – Point of Order! We just heard the Health Minister present a 5-10 minute speech, and if the Opposition Leader is raising issues of information or qualification, he had every opportunity to attack the facts presented by Health Minister. He has not raised a single issue in that speech. He provided details of the status of COVID-19; he provided the Government's response, and he provided the response by health expects. If you are questioning whether he should be a doctor, he presented a speech and he provided facts. You can dispute them, if not then you are raising a point that is pointless. Thank you.

Mr BELDEN NAMAHA – Thank you, scientist. Mr Speaker, I'm happy that the Government is now talking about a stimulus budget, and I think it is the step in the right direction. We are happy that the Government will be introducing the Supplementary Budget, and we in the Opposition will support it because the country needs it.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr ALLAN BIRD (East Sepik) – Mr Speaker, I too would like to debate. I have raised many of these issues since January, and even though it is not normal for a member of Government to stand in this House and speak plainly, Mr Speaker, I must state at the outset that I represent 600 000 Sepiks. That is my primary responsibility in this House, and when agencies of government do not respond, it becomes a big problem.

Mr Speaker, you can criticise the Member for Vanim-Green and make jokes but his district is right on the border. I would normally speak against the Opposition Leader but his district is right on the border, and we are making fun of it in this House. You have been talking about border posts and make it look like there is a fence running along there, but let me paint the picture for you. The border is 760 kilometres long and there is a house located in the middle of it, but there is no fence. So don't make fun of it because this is serious. If you don't like the Opposition Leader then that is fine, but respect the fact that he represents the people of Vanim-Green.

A lot of time and money is spent on building facilities in Port Moresby, but where is the hotspot? I have my people of East Sepik crossing daily. You have placed restrictions but where is your border control. You have made restrictions in writing but there is no one there to man the border. You cannot just write on a piece of paper and expect spirits or insects to implement those restrictions. What powers does your letter carry when people can just walk across? You are a government only if you can protect your borders. Our border has holes all along it.

My people of East Sepik are getting on a motor boats at 2 o'clock in the morning to travel to Jayapura, and there is no one there to stop them. The latest person who was caught two days ago was a woman. Let's be realistic, we are talking about lives of people.

25/01

Don't defend yourself when your letter has no impact, or when no one respects your letter. We are concerned because you are only talking about Port Moresby and Lae as the hotspots when I have had 56 people who have crossed the border from Jayapura. How many have gone to Lae or Port Moresby?

And then somebody decides to leak my concerns that were raised in the Caucus. Do you know anything about hausman or do you even have them in your own cultures. Grow up, please!

This is unprecedented, we have never shut the country down before. We are not following the right way to shut the country for another two months. My people back at home chopped down trees to block off the roads; that is your shutdown. This shutdown is uncoordinated and when we give constructive criticism, please accept it. In the event someone dies during the shutdown, you will pay compensation.

Mr Speaker, when we initially discussed the 14-day restriction, most of us supported it because it made sense. But we were told that this 14-day period in SOE would allow the State Institutions to check and identify the persons of interest or infected with this virus, and then quarantine those hotspot areas. It is now the tenth day, and I still want to know what we have resolved or found out during this period. We are constantly asking whether we have made progress in the findings of this virus since it first came into this country and every day I keep asking how many have been tested for the virus.

Mr Speaker, I commend the team in my province led by Dr Linda Thompson, they covered the entire province. I also commend all the DAs especially for Yangoru-Saussia who did an amazing job. We didn't asked for funding assistance from the National Government, we used funds from the districts and province. The medical team went and traced down every single person and as of today out of the 37 persons of interest, 31 have been eliminated and only 6 are still under quarantine. Samples were not collected from any of these people because we don't have sample kits in Wewak. When I requested for sample kits it was never sent from here. We had 46 soldiers who came from border area some couple of days ago so in total we have 52 persons of interest in East Sepik, who are quarantined at Moem Barracks. That is how our system is operating in East Sepik. And I sympathise with my brother, the Governor of West Sepik, because they had to catch and literally lock up those undisciplined men and women in their cells. And he is now screaming for help, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, we were promised some information that would be provided to this House as a result of this 14-day shutdown. I want the Minister responsible to report to us on what he has discovered in the pandemic. My province is at high risk because of this trading which has been going on for more than 25 years, between us and the Indonesians. If you want to shut it down as the Opposition Leader has stated, you got to pay attention to the border.

Aside from this, Mr Speaker, this is unprecedented and we all agree that when we declare a State of Emergency, we suspend the constitutional rights of our people. It is not an easy thing and we shouldn't take it lightly. We all represent each district and the Executive Government has asked the Parliament, a different body, to support them to suspend our

people's rights for two months. But because of the principles - and I fully respect the Prime Minister, who is listening today - I question the advice given to you, Mr Prime Minister. Who is advising our Government and country, is it the World Health Organisation or Health Department advising the Government?

When this advice is received, how do we know that it is correct? Of course, there are people dying from the virus in Italy, Spain and et cetera, but we have more people dying of over here more people are dying of TB, as we sit in this House, and not one person has died of COVID-19 as yet. We have more people dying of HIV-AIDS, malaria and childbirth.

26/01

We have people dying of aids and malaria, women dying of child birth, so please we have to seriously look into these matters too. We are all leaders, we need to be given the benefit of all the information. The executive government needs to present the information that will justify us suspending our people's rights for two months.

Mr Speaker, it is a serious matter. I would like to know, who gave us this advice. I like the plea from the Prime Minister and why I support him is because, I agree with what he has said but otherwise I still ask, where is the evidence? You know, I drove to all villages in my district to talk to them personally due to road blocks and when I met up with the villagers they said; Governor, we were warned not to sell our produce and now all our produce have gone to waste, so what I did was, I instructed all mothers to sell their produce and I also want to command the councillor of Passam because he sat there to stop the police from harassing the women in Wewak as they sat there next to their village to sell their food and they said that the instructions came from here, Port Moresby. You are remote controlling my province from here when you know nothing about what is going on here on the ground.

All ministers, know where you stand, if you want to operate in my province, you ask me! You ask my people do not just give me a blanket thing from up here.

"Why are our people afraid?" because we are acting to be afraid, the people are seeing we, members wearing mask and that is why the people are scared too.

I went to Winge when they locked the village with twenty suspects who came back from Indonesia, Sepik's were all frightened and the entire village was locked off, the people did not vote for us to be afraid here in Parliament.

If the soldiers and the nurses, doctors put their lives down and risk it, you should too! We did not come here to wear fancy suits and stand in front of the cameras and look nice, we are here to serve the people we serve.

Honourable members, separations of power, demands that we question our executive government, it is our government and we must question them; "Give us the evidence?"

Personally, I am finding it hard to stop my people from selling their produce for the next two months, that is why, I want justification on "how many individuals have been suspected of Covid-19?" you have two weeks to check everywhere, we have a testing capability here of 300 cases per day, somehow, we have only tested 86. I want to put to you that our testing capability is 86 not 300.

On behalf of this honourable house I am asking, "Where is the evidence?", "Where is the advice and who provided it?"

Mr Speaker, we are going to have a big problem in feeding all men and women, we all know there is no vaccines in treating this virus, we all know this! You do not have to be a scientist, everybody is writing it down. The person in Lae, recovered by himself not with treatment, that we know. We can say that healthy men and women may survive this pandemic virus but "how can our people be healthy, when the 3 days when I stuck in Port Moresby not a single truck loader was not allowed to bring kumu, fresh fruits and vegetables and even air freight services in the highlands was not allowed as well and even Wewak too.

Mr Speaker and some Ministers, if my statement offended you all, I am speaking on behalf of my people, airing their grievances

27/01

Mr Speaker, I do not know why God has spared my people but I am thankful that no one in my province currently has COVID-19.

Mr JAMES MARAPE (Tari-Pori – Prime Minister) – Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to make an intervention here, but I will be moving for us to pass my motion that is on the Floor.

The Deputy Prime Minister will present the Bills later where there will be opportunity for further debate.

Before I move the motion, I have heard the speakers before me and I would just like to make myself clear that the call for the extension of an SOE is refined which gives power to

the controller to make intervention where need be on key specific areas, especially the border areas which we are concerned about.

As of next week Monday when the 14 days lapses, we would want to have a completed map on the presence of COVID-19 - because of the first positive case that came in on 13 March, 2020 - to reveal to us whether there was a possibility of other breaches that took place. If one passenger that was on that PX flight which came from Singapore that morning had easily gone through with the presence of the virus then there could be a high possibility that other passengers have entered in similar manner. So we had a 14-day shutdown coinciding with the 14-day incubation period for Coronavirus to have propagated if someone came into contact with the infected person. That is the reason why the 14-day period of total shutdown was necessary.

As I speak today our present map indicates that despite the intrusions and movements in and out of the borders and first positive case that has come in, the present state of our Nation in response to COVID-19 is that there is absolutely no COVID-19 present in our country, which is a direct consequence of stopping the spread.

I note the Governor of East Sepik's correct review that despite the instruction that was passed earlier this year for the non-crossing of borders there are still people crossing borders. As we speak, we have dispatched soldiers to the borders on both north and south as limited as they are. I said earlier that we would have the physical presence of quarantine facilities built in both Vanimo and Kiunga for future response to defence and protecting people from coming in and going out.

The 14-day isolation will lapse week Monday and as we move out of that 14-day isolation for the map of COVID-19 the continual domestic control will remain, however, domestic flights will open up and the controller will give certain specific protocol and operation orders will be issued so we know who is moving about so we can keep track of people moving through domestic travel. But it will be on a lighter standard than this first total nationwide lockdown.

I would like to make it clear so that everyone knows that as of next week Tuesday domestic flights should be reopened but you will be required by the controller to provide details especially when you are moving from one hotspot to another in our effort to ensure that we do not spread the Coronavirus by moving domestically.

Our international flights will still be banned till further notice while we take stock of this one. That is why you will need the SOE. The controller will that give allowances for

specific flights such as chartered flights bringing in medical supplies and we are organising one chartered flight to come in either from Australia or China where all medical kits and equipment are being mobilised for us to dispatch a flight to bring them in. So those specific control measures have been announced by the controller as we come out of our 14-day initial shutdown.

If the Parliament can bear with us as the Deputy Prime Minister proposes the four Bills which will anchor our conduct in the next two months. I would like to assure Parliament that this is not a strict lockdown where people's rights and movement will be totally prohibited. You can move to and from places but in a controlled fashion that we will be encouraging to keep us safe from Corona intrusion as well as ensuring that we do not allow an environment for Coronavirus to spread. Just because one person is not infected by the virus in our country doesn't give us the ability to just relax.

28/01

As the Governor of East Sepik mentioned, our border spots remain hotspots when we move into the next phase of our operation next week. I will personally visit Wutung and Vanimo so that we have permanent infrastructure set up in those areas that are associated with our military bases or our CIS facility. The CIS facilities nationwide is one place we will look at to build isolation facilities or camps so that if the Coronavirus is detected in our country then we have a response isolated area set up for treatment, cure and management of the virus.

Mr Speaker, with this, I ask Parliament to support the Bills that the Deputy Prime Minister will propose later.

I move –

That the Parliament as authorized by *Section 239 (3) of the Constitution* extend the National Emergency declared in COVID 19, Coronavirus Pandemic in Papua New Guinea by a period of two months, from its expiry on Sunday 5 April, 2020.

The Bill requiring an absolute majority of 56 Members, as required by the *Constitution*, Mr Speaker ordered that the Bells be rung.

(Voting in progress)

29/01

The Parliament voted (the Speaker, **Mr Job Pomat** in the Chair) –

AYES – 96

NOES – 0

Motion so agreed to.

MOTION BY LEAVE

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschaffen – Minister for Finance and Rural Development) –
I ask leave of Parliament to move a motion without notice.

Leave granted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent the Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney-General presenting:

- (a) Emergency (General Provisions) (COVID 19) Bill 2020,
- (b) Emergency (Defence Force) (COVID 19) Bill 2020,
- (c) Public Health (Amendment) Bill 2020; and
- (d) Quarantine (Amendment) Bill 2020 being called forthwith.

30/01

EMERGENCY (GENERAL PROVISIONS) (COVID-19) BILL 2020

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Davies Steven** and read a first time.

Second Reading

Leave granted to move the Second Reading forthwith.

Mr DAVIS STEVEN (Esa'ala – Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) – I move

—
That the bill now read a second time.

Mr Speaker and honourable Members of Parliament, I am honoured to rise on this occasion to introduce four pieces of legislation starting with the Emergency (General Provisions) (COVID-19) Bill 2020. Given the necessity of time, I will make one statement that covers also the Emergency (Defence Force) (COVID-19) Bill 2020, the Quarantine (Amendment) Bill 2020 and the Public Health (Amendment) Bill 2020 for consideration by this Honourable House.

The two emergency bills, namely the Emergency (General Provisions) (COVID-19) Bill 2020 and the Emergency (Defence Force) (COVID-19) Bill 2020 are required by constitutional law as of necessity.

The two other bills are intended to introduce necessary amendments to the principal legislation to empower relevant officials to impose control and directions that affect the rights of our citizens at a time when the need arises.

Honourable leaders are respectfully urged to know the rationale behind the proposed bills and to support the passage of these bills because as mentioned in debate today, Parliament has the ultimate power to oversight the actions of the Executive arm in the case of a State of Emergency and on this occasion Parliament has exercised this power to extend the State of Emergency.

Let me share a few points about the need for us to consider the amendments to the other principal public legislation that I just referred to because in the event that in any given time that Parliament does not convene to agree to extend states of emergency, these amendments will enable our health officials and other agencies to support pandemics.

31/01

As explained in the Prime Minister's address today, the Head of State, acting on the advice of the National Executive Council, has declared a State of Emergency under Part 10 of our *Constitution*.

Mr Speaker, that State of Emergency is still current and, therefore, we are grateful that the Parliament has today voted to extend the term of the State of Emergency. Previously in such situations, Parliament invoked Part 10 of the *Constitution* providing for National Emergencies. Now it is the first of its kind where an emergency is to be declared over the entire country.

Mr Speaker, my ministry has been confronted with the task of applying provisions of Part 10 of the *Constitution* to the current situation and in doing so, seeking to align procedures with existing arrangements and the realities we face. This process has revealed the need for reviewing and updating our existing legal framework which I will allude to later. For example, we are now reviewing laws relating to and covering decision-making process in an emergency including the call out of members of PNGDF in different circumstances prescribed in the law.

Mr Speaker, the *Constitution* is very clear on the declaration and termination of State of Emergencies and where that authority lies. In other words, it is only the Parliament that makes extensions. These extensions can never be beyond two months and the provisions are clearly set out in our *Constitution*. Given the urgency in an emergency situation, the *Constitution* allows for Cabinet as in this case, to be the initial point for a declaration to be made but that is subject to the approval and the reporting conditions as we have seen today.

Acts can only be made by Parliament because Part 10 of the *Constitution* allows for the development of Emergency Regulations by the Executive Arm or Government as an initial measure as in this case. On this basis, the Government and NEC has already set regulations in place since the declaration of National Emergency hence the Emergency General Provision of *Covid-19 Regulation 2020* which was registered and gazetted following the decision on 26 March 2020.

These regulations have established the Emergency Controller who has overall command during the National Emergency. It provides for its functions and powers including amongst other things the issuance of general emergency orders.

In anticipation of our decision today to extend the National Emergency, the proposed *Emergency General Provision CovidD-19 Act 2020* has been designed to replace the

regulations and together with the proposed *Defence Force Covid-19 Act 2020* to enable the continued engagement of our PNGDF personnel.

Furthermore, in response to the National Emergency, NEC has set up Ministerial Committees and Multi-Agency Taskforce to allow for coordination at various levels between the Emergency Controller and the NEC Ministerial Committees, and between the Ministerial Committees and the Prime Minister who in turns instructs and consults with the Emergency Controller. That is in accordance with the theme of the legislation.

Emergency powers as declared by the Prime Minister today will be now elevated and captured in the legislation that is before the House.

32/01

This legislation now enables or empowers this Bill before Parliament for the making of orders. I have heard the debate especially from sub-national level, particularly from the leaders at the provinces. This legislation captures the power for the Emergency Controller to delegate. It was there for this reason that the initial NEC decision required provinces to set up their emergency committees and establish emergency coordination centres and to begin to liaise. It is this Government's intention that immediately after Parliament passes this legislation to work on orders, including those that have been promulgated, in consultation with provinces.

I want to highlight that it is our intention to manage the emergency that Coronavirus has imposed on our country, responsibly and in accordance with law. This cannot be done from Waigani; this will be done in consultation and with cooperation.

Mr Speaker, the legislation that enables the call out of our PNGDF personnel is intended, as the Prime Minister said, to now focus on the areas that concern us the most, namely the border.

It is therefore, Mr Speaker, in my respectful view, necessary that the Proposed Bills now before this Honourable House are supported. In addressing the legal issues arising from Coronavirus challenge, we have now seen the need to review existing laws to deal with emergencies in our country. Many questions have been asked when the Executive arm of the Government was confronted, especially on the practicality of recalling Parliament and the issues involving our forced abilities and inabilities. But many of our laws including the ones

I have indicated are laws that require to be changed, reviewed and amended today, so that they are applicable and suitable to the circumstances of our country.

Mr Speaker, some of this issues include, in respect to the *Constitution* to some degree, we need to set out clearly the relationship between the Executive arm and the Parliament following the declaration of a National Emergency. Whilst it is important to ensure parliamentary control, it is equally important to allow for flexibility and fluidity in responding to emergency situations. Section 2, 39 currently dictates that Parliament convenes no more than 15 days after commencement of a National Emergency and regularly thereafter.

Experience in dealing with COVID-19 has now shown that it may not always be practical to convene Parliament within the times stipulated. For example, today's Parliament session goes against what we are telling our people to do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in observing social distancing by maintaining a minimum of 2 metres separation in contact with others.

33/01

But because constitutional requirements are needed, we are here to fulfil our duties as leaders but finding the laws as they are in the current state of emergency, we have our duty to also ensure that our laws are reviewed and are made consistent with the challenges we face in Government.

My ministry and department has considered the passing of a dedicated Emergency Law that should automatically come into operation upon declaration of State of Emergency. This proposed Emergency Law will ideally cover core matters that are common to any emergency.

In order for this to happen Part 10 of our *Constitution* needs to be amended to enable such Acts. In previous declared state of emergencies the coordination of government response has been placed in the hands of an emergency controller. Given that that controller has the overall command during the emergency, this position should be established under Part 10 to amplify the prominence of the role and to clearly define his mandate and reporting obligations.

The Parliament Emergency Committee as provided under the *Constitution* has a significant role to play in national emergencies, in that, the National Emergency Committee of Parliament provides the necessary oversight of the Honourable House, the first arm of our Government.

However, this Honourable House may need to consider how best to review our laws so we can give more prominence to this committee.

Now to the Proposed Bills, I reiterate in conclusion that the Bills are necessary to provide the legal basis for quarantine measures that are vital to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19, and these are the supporting bills.

I want to mention that these laws have been adopted from three independent statutes hence the need to bring them into compliance with Section 38 of our *Constitution* on qualified rights and to update the penalty provisions. I am referring to the two Bills that will be introduced later. These Amendment Bills highlight the need for broader review of existing laws to bring them up to speed with changing circumstances especially where such laws have bearing on an emergency situation.

Mr Speaker, allow me now to say something briefly about the involvement of Parliament in relation to the call-out of our men and women in our PNG Defence Force in times of emergency.

The involvement of the Defence Force during the declared National Emergency is provided for under Section 202(c)(iii) of the *Constitution* which requires an *Emergency Act* to give the legislative basis for their involvement.

In the present case the Defence Force was called out by the Head of State, pursuant to Section 202(c)(ii), to provide assistance to the Police Force. This decision is valid until Parliament has decided to enact or not to enact the Proposed Bill today. The *Emergency Act* refer to as the Emergency Defence Force (COVID-19) Bill 2020 that is present before honourable Members for consideration and enactment.

Once again these provisions in our laws clearly demonstrate that the current processes under the *Constitution* are stringent and the challenge to review this provisions in our time.

Mr Speaker and honourable Members of this House, as a final note, we are required under the *Constitution* to ensure that there is a working Emergency Committee of the National Parliament.

34/01

In an emergency situation where it may not be practical to regularly convene Parliament to consider matters regarding national emergencies, including formulation of orders by the Emergency Controller, this Committee plays an important role in maintaining Parliament's involvement and that Parliament is informed.

More importantly, this Committee is required to make a report in a statement to the Parliament when it next meets following the current extension. As such, immediately following this Parliament session, the Emergency Committee is required to be empowered and available for purposes of consultation with those of us who are working to support the Controller of the State of Emergency in respect to formulation of orders.

Mr Speaker, with those remarks I now commend the Emergency General Provision (COVID-19) Bill 2020.

Mr CHRIS HAIVETA (Gulf) – Mr Speaker, firstly, I support the Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General for introducing the first Bill to operationalize the State of Emergency. I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister and the NEC for taking a decisive step towards the shutdown. Without the Government's swift response, we would have been in a worse situation today.

Today, even though we have no COVID-19 detection test kits, we can say we are COVID-19 - free.

Mr Speaker, we are COVID-19 – free but we share a land border with one of the largest and most populace country. They have COVID-19 cases in the two big urban areas on the side of the border; Merauke on the southern side and Jayapura on the northern side of the border.

Mr Speaker, Brisbane, Australia, in the State of Queensland, also has COVID-19 cases so it is our paramount task to protect our borders. We must not take lightly the issues that have been raised by the Governors of East and West Sepik, the Governor of Oro and myself and others from Government caucus.

Mr Speaker, I want to raise this concern. Parliament is not sitting but we raise issues that demand answers but we have not yet had one single response from the Government. My province of Gulf has 34000 km² of land, it has the largest delta system in the country.

35/01

It has over 1 000 criss-crossing waterways that go all the way up to the Fly River and ends with the Purari River and the Lakekamu Basin that connects 10 rivers draining the southern slopes of the most popular region of the country, the Highlands region.

My province borders seven other provinces and we have a maritime border with Australia as well. The waters of Gulf are 149 square kilometres and we border Australia,

Western and Central provinces. I want to remind the Parliament that our borders are poorest up until now.

For example; if you get up at Morehead today and you go up to Sota, you walk for two to three hours across to Suki. Then from Suki you get on a dinghy and travel six hours to get to Kikori. Then you travel another three hours to be in Kerema and in another five hours you will be in Port Moresby. That is a total of 15 hours to travel by sea from Morehead to Port Moresby. Gulf is connect by a maritime highway all the way into Indonesia.

Do we have people at Sota and Suki? You tell me!

Mr Speaker, we have Indonesians trading for fish boats in Lake Murray, Gwaribari, Era, on the Purari Delta and in Kikori. I have posted that there will be a Court filed and up today I have not had any response from the National Government.

I also raised that we have another black route running from Mirauke all the way to the Torres Strait Islands on the Australian side right down to the last island, and from there it takes six hours to go into Kikori River or into the Fly River or Balimo. How are we going to stop this? From Dangi Island you can make it straight across, you can bypass Daru which is what is happening and in between there you have all those little posts. I am talking about the southern side and I have not covered the northern side. I need people there and not just people manning the borders with Indonesia. I need a patrol boat and small boat teams in all those rivers and I need the Navy to standby in Daru or Kikori. I have yet to see a plan from the National Government on this issue.

Mr Speaker, what do I do at the provincial level? In response to the National Government, we have plans to deploy up to 1 000 people to look after my borders with the seven provinces and to ensure that all the communities are safe. We have allocated K2.8 million of our own internal revenue and right now we are operating with our own money just like the East Sepik, West Sepik and Western province.

36/01

I am not asking the National Government to give me any new money. I want the National Government to give me my function grant of K22 million. They have not paid me and the other provinces. Mine is K22 million and this is for January, February and March.

These are grants that are constitutionally guaranteed for us to provide services to our people. I have asked and have not got any explanation as to what is the problem. We have the Minister for Treasury to give us a nice fancy plan but where is the money? Give me what I

need, even if you give me half, I do not need your money. I need you to deploy Defence and I need you to pay me so that I can get my 1000 people including ward members and the Gulf public servants and 300 health workers of the provincial health authority which you control at the national level. I do not control them. And you have not given them money. There are 200 policemen and reservists, all waiting to go. We are funding their operations but I need your help.

Like I said, I do not need anything new, give me what is owed to me. Give me my development levies, my IDG. During the O'Neill government he promised to make amendments so that resource provinces can be paid directly from the operators. In May when we come back I want you to make those changes, so that we can get those funds and we can look after our people. COVID-19 has not hit us yet but it will hit us if we are relaxing. It will still hit us. I fully support the extension and I have 11 surveillance points and I also want us to agree to lift the betel nut ban. I respectfully request my colleague Governor of NCD, because we do not want our people to go hungry in the city. My province is a big betel nut supplier, and it is not only that but a lot of our informal sector people rely on betel nut for their daily livelihood.

NCD Governor, they are your voters; it is their choice. If they want to chew they chew. Your choice is to patrol and regulate but you must not stop them from earning an income. You want to protect the big banks so what do you do, you get the central bank to give a two per cent reduction and what do they do, they only give one per cent, but that is to the big bank. What are you doing about the informal sector and SMEs?

37/01

We have a K5.6 billion economic package given but it is all words because there is no evidence that it is coming until May when you can give us the budget so that we can debate on it. At the moment it is all words and like I said, I have not gotten the money from this year's budget for my province.

Mr Treasurer, when you bring the money in, can you please look at maintaining the existing infrastructures? It is the rainy season and our roads are already falling apart. In that K5.6 billion please allocate some money for the maintenance of our roads, bridges and airports. Can we also consider some money for the protection of our SMEs? We should also consider essential companies like Air Niugini. As it is we do not have a package for Air Niugini. Where is it? I trust that Minister Muthuvel will tell Parliament what he has in plans

for Air Niugini. Where are the packages for PNG Power and Telikom to provide the essential services for our people in this trying times? I have touched on the banks but why is BSP passing only 1 per cent, why can't they pass the full 2 per cent? Where is the package for companies engaged in logistics and transportation? What are the specific policies that you have for them?

Mr Speaker, finally, I want us to do things the right way. Why? The constitutional requirements of a State of Emergency is clear. The NEC has the powers to make the declaration but it does not have the power to specify the time period. The time periods are stipulated in the *Constitution* and it is 21 days. In 21 days you must have the Orders, the Acts and the Regulations and everything else ready to present on the Floor of Parliament.

However, you have done 14 days and revoked it and have brought another 14 days on. I trust that the Leader of Government will bring forth nominations to appoint the deputy chairman and members for the Parliamentary Committee with regard to the emergency. The emergency is for two months and we must comply with it because it is constitutional.

Mr Speaker, it is now incumbent on the Government to put the committee in place so that it can take charge of things for these two months in our absence. The committee will provide an oversight of what the Government is doing and make its report to Parliament when it sits again.

38/01

With those few remarks, Mr Speaker, I fully support the actions of the Government in enabling legislation for the controller and the actions that are to be carried out. What I question is not the Government's will and their desire, which we all support but the financial means to carry what we want to achieve during this very unprecedented time.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Motion — That the question be now put — agreed to.

Motion — That the bill be now read a second time — agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General

A message from His Excellency, the Governor-General, dated 2nd April 2020, was announced recommending the expenditure of public monies of Papua New Guinea in accordance with *Section 210* of the *Constitution* insofar as the bill relates to and provides for such expenditure.

Third Reading

Leave granted to move the Third Reading forthwith.

Motion (by **Mr Davies Steven**) proposed –

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Mr GARRY JUFFA (Northern) – I rise to support the effort here for the extension of the State of Emergency but I wish to just add some comments which I think are very important and relevant for our people. They would want these questions to be asked or they would want clarification in regards to the two months extension.

First and foremost in such situations, what is very important for our people is information. They need to understand what this two months extension means for them, for their children, for their businesses, and for their day to day livelihoods et cetera.

So, I am sure that this Government is putting together information regarding this or the mechanics but the people need to understand exactly what that means so that they be satisfied. They are not anxious. They are people who live day to day, where they have to earn a living every day to survive – to buy a meal.

Some of you may have never been in this situation but some of us have. We know what it is like. And in the challenges and difficulties of living day to day, how are we going to consider these people and their situation.

That's what they need to know. This is the information that's very important and vital for our people to understand.

I totally support what my fellow governors have expressed here. The Governor of Gulf spoke of the functional grants. We have spoken of the functional grants as governors for

a long time. It never comes. It comes in dribs and drabs. It started, I am told, in 2012. Prior to that apparently functional grants used to flow quite smoothly and on a timely basis.

We cannot continue this way. Functional grants are funds that are owed to the people of this country. They must be paid in a timely manner. So I agree with that point.

I also endorse what the Governor of East Sepik has said, something which I myself have been saying since before 2012 about the forest border, 760 kilometres of it. It was unpoliced since 1988 when we withdrew the troops from there and deployed them in Bougainville.

39/01

We have never returned them and in fact we have never developed our army to a capacity where it can be able to service this nation. The army is the badge of sovereignty of any nation but we have allowed our army to be decimated and dismantled to a minor security force. Now we are brought to this situation, where we are starting to pay attention to them; issues of national security and border security.

These pleas are very real. That border is traversed by so many smuggling operations and the movement of people across the border is 24/7. It is unfathomable, it can only be managed when we have patrols taking place from north and south and meeting in the middle and reverting again. It used to happen prior to 1988.

We must seriously take stock of our national security. This is a subject matter that I have been speaking on for so long and I am glad to see that now. Thanks to a virus, it has brought us to a point where we are all paying attention to it which is great.

I commend the Government on how they are handling this crisis to a degree but I can also tell you that what Governor Allan Bird expressed in his frustrations is very true. And I am not saying this whilst there are number of Ministers who are doing their very best where they can and we applaud you for that but there are those who have risen so high that they see us as mere mortals and they don't communicate with us. Many of us are constantly asking for answers for this and that and getting ignored by them. We represent our provinces, your provinces. Information is exceptionally very vital, people need to understand and radios need to be broadcasting, pamphlets needs to be dropped, information teams need to be dispatched to every ward, electorate and province informing our people in relevant languages that they can understand about what is happening and how this virus is going to impact their day to day lives.

For instance, what plans do we have for our children's education? What can they do or cannot do? How are we going to look at our SMEs that are definitely going to take a huge shift from this situation? That is why it is every important that they must be kept informed about what is happening.

I want to make special mention of the Health Department. We have become victims of a situation that has developed over a few decades where we have allowed this very vital department to become so corrupted and compromised that now the entire nation and its citizens are in danger. I am glad to say that there are still some good people in there but they need to be the people who are given support and bad apples need to be weeded out. We must carefully watch what is going to happen in terms of the funds that are going to be allocated. We all know what happens when there is a State of Emergency and a significant amount of funds made available. There are all manner of creatures waiting to come and collect those funds in inflated contracts. Let us not forget the amazing APEC meeting that was supposed to benefit all of us but benefited nobody or only a few, may I say.

Let me revert to my discussions and points that I want to make on the Health Department. Now we all need to band together so I am going to restrain myself from 'I told you so,' or 'we should have done this or we could have done that'. Now we need to pay attention to the Health Department and give the support it needs and at the same time manage it in such a way that when it faces such situations or experiences, it must be a better performing organisation.

I will tell you my experience as Governor of Northern Province where the PHA system completely failed us. We are still waiting for the CEO position to be advertised one year since I brought this to the attention of the Department of Personnel Management so many times. Why? Because corrupt persons in there have tried to manipulate the system to put their own friends and cronies. We do not want this. I said to advertise this position using a private recruiting firm, transparency, good governance and this will ensure we get someone based on merit. Even if we get someone from overseas, so be it.

We are sick and tired of the Department of Personnel Management and National Department of Health trying to manipulate the system to place their own friends in this type of organisation, which deal with lives of our people.

40/01

During this crisis, nobody from the National Department of Health bothered to communicate with my acting CEO. In fact, they were sending information to their friends on the ground in my province and developing a parallel system. This is the type of situation that I'm talking about which we must correct.

I flew over and I stayed there to make sure our PPEs arrived in the province, but they didn't arrive on the very plane that I went on after I was assured that it would arrive there. When we communicated with the National Health Department, they said they had sent them. I said no, these were back-orders for our TB treatment division and the normal orders that we get for a month. I said, where are our PPEs? They then said they would send them on the next trip.

They didn't even bother to communicate with us. My acting CEO has told me that they never informed him about what's going on or what's happening.

When they created the PHA, a proper induction was not conducted. They were there for one week and after two days they went shopping for Oro taro – which is the best in the universe.

The Board never got any instructions on how to operate as a board. The PHAs is a great idea, as I supported it and that is why I rolled it out, but we became victims because the department that was responsible failed to take charge and due attention was never given to that entity.

During this time, I wish to suggest that – and please I am on the verge of exiting the Government *WhatsApp* group, I'm telling you. I like my fellow governor over there, but I am sick and tired of speaking to people who are not listening. Take note, every PHA should have an officer in the National Department of Health that is responsible to that PHA, to be able to maintain contact with that PHA on a daily basis, and whatever the issues that that PHA faces, they can attend to it in a timely manner, especially now during this crisis that we are facing. Now you can see what is happening in Angau Hospital. They are going on strike because they feel that they are not informed and don't know what is going on. That is in regards to the PHA but in regards to the information that's going out about COVID-19, and I don't want to be accused of being a scientist but let me say some things that I do know.

One of the things I do know about this disease and this is something you can research on the internet, and I am sure many of you have smart phones, so be smart and start using

them. You don't have to be a scientist but you can find out some basic information about COVID-19.

Mr Speaker, I found out that COVID-19 attacks those with weak immune systems. There is no information coming from the National Department of Health to tell our people to improve their immune system to live a life where they may embrace nutritious and organic diet. There is no advice telling the people to refrain from consuming illicit substances that are destroying their immune system. You just tell them that it's going to attack the weak immune system so that when they start to cough, they should call this hotline or talk to this person or that person or how about telling them about what they need to do as individual about their own personal health and how about encouraging them to educate their families, children and those around them. This is a great opportunity for us to start encouraging our people to return to the diet that maintained us as a people for thousands of years.

Mr Minister, I hope you are taking note. I must advise you that I blocked your number on my phone because I never received a response from you when I tried to communicate with you about this matter. Therefore, I will be communicate with you through a public forum either on *Facebook*, *Instagram*, through TV or radio. This will be my communication methods. If you don't listen to me, okay, fine. I represent my people of Oro, just like all my fellow governors here who represent their people in their provinces, which all of you are part of. By the way, you all don't come from another alternative universe or some other planet.

41/01

I must inform you so please take note about this situation. The information pamphlets in relevant languages; Pidgin, English and Motu must be disseminated so our people will understand what is happening and how it will affect them. We must get used to the reality that we will be living with COVID-19 for possibly 2 years.

In 1918, the Spanish flu hit the world and they didn't know how long it will last and 2 years later, 20 million died. These are some of the realities that we must think about. I commend the Prime Minister and his team because he has approached this situation with a calm attitude which is good and we need that. He has also taken stock of the information available and made his decision in a deliberate and calculated manner. But Ministers, you need to support the Prime Minister by communicating with your Governors so that they will inform our people of what is happening.

Whilst I am at it, I want to make mention of the Minister for Forest, Minister you have done far better than your predecessors. But you must ban the logging ships that are still coming in despite the bans that we have put in place. They are still coming and creeping into our logging ponds. Who knows what else they are bringing in besides COVID-19. Minister, I have told you many times that there are illegal logging operations in my province and they are still operating.

I have instructed my people in my village to burn the ships when they turn up because we don't know who is in there and what they are doing. Whether they have been quarantined or not and even what they are eating on this boat.

Ministers, please communicate with your Governors and come down to earth, this is where rest of us mortals live. Other than that, I want to say that I support this extension and just want our people to understand what is happening and they must be informed as soon as possible because now we live in technology age where there is a lot of rhetoric rumour, disinformation, fake news and its already out there.

Today as we sit here, it's already flooding the information spaces that our people access. Instead we must inform them about factual information rather than fake news. So that they can get prepared for it.

One example, in Samoa the children are having their classes on TV and radio. So they are not missing out on their schooling. Their Government has put in place systems to be able to inform the children of what is happening. Their tertiary students are schooling online, high school students are getting it on TV and even schools in remote areas are schooling on radios.

Many of us before in community schools use to have classes on radios and it's still very useful and necessary.

Minister for Communication please take note and with that I want to thank you for sending four technicians from NBC who came to Northern Province. They have completed the work and I was advised that our Radio Northern will be in operation by this weekend.

He is a good Minister; he communicates with me. Thankyou Mr Speaker, for allowing me to debate on behalf of the people of Oro.

Motion – That the question be now put – agreed to.

Motion – That the Bill be now read a third time – agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

42/01

EMERGENCY (DEFENCE FORCE) (COVID-19) BILL 2020

First reading

Bill presented by **Mr Davis Steven** and read a first time.

Second Reading

Bill by leave, read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General

A message from His Excellency, the Governor-General dated 2 April 2020 was announced recommending the expenditure of public monies of Papua New Guinea in accordance with *Section 210* of the *Constitution* insofar as the bill relates to provides for such expenditure.

Third Reading

Bill by leave, read a third time.

PUBLIC HEALTH (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020

First reading

Bill presented by **Mr Davis Steven** and read the first time.

Second Reading

Bill, by leave, read a second time.

Third Reading

Leave granted to move the third reading forthwith.

Motion (by **Mr Steven Davies**) proposed –

That the Bill be now read the third time.

Motion – That the question be now put – agreed to.

The Bill requiring an absolute majority of 56 Members as required by the *Constitution*, Mr Speaker ordered that the Bells be rung.

43/01

(Voting in progress)

44/01

(Voting in progress)

The Parliament voted (the Speaker, **Mr Job Pomat** in the Chair) –

AYES – 95

NOES – 0

The Bill passed with the concurrence of an absolute majority as required by the *Constitution*.

Bill read a third time.

QUARANTINE (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Davis Steven** and read a first time.

Second Reading

Bill, by leave, read a second time.

Third Reading

Leave granted to move the Third Reading forthwith

Motion by (**Mr Davis Steven**) proposed –

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion – That the question be now put – agreed to.

The Bill requiring an absolute majority of 56 Members as required by the *Constitution*, Mr Speaker ordered that the Bells be rung.

45/01

The Parliament voted (the Speaker, **Mr Job Pomat** in the Chair) –

AYES – 95

NOES – 0

Bill passed with the concurrence of an absolute majority as required by the *Constitution*.

Bill read a third time.

46/01

MOTION BY LEAVE

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschhafen – Minister for Finance and Rural Development) –

I ask leave of Parliament to move a motion without notice.

Leave granted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent the Speaker presenting Statutory Instrument No. 1 of 2020, Emergency (General Provision) (Corvid-19) Regulation 2020 forthwith.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT No.1 OF 2020 – EMERGENCY (GENERAL PROVISION) CORVID-19 REGULATION 2020

The following paper was presented pursuant to Statute:

Emergency (General Provisions) (COVID 19) Act 2020 – Statutory Instrument No.1 of 2020, Emergency (General Provision) (Corvid-19) Regulation 2020.

MOTION BY LEAVE

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschhafen – Minister for Finance and Rural Development) –

I ask leave of Parliament to move a motion without notice.

Leave granted.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS –
REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS**

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent me moving a motion relating to the appointment of Members to the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Emergency.

**PERMANENT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY –
APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS**

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That Honourable William Powi be appointed Deputy Chairman and Honourable William Onglo and Honourable Walter Schnaubelt be appointed members of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Emergency.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That Parliament at its rising adjourn until Tuesday 2nd June at 2.00 o'clock p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That the Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 7.25 p.m.