

SECOND DAY

Wednesday 11 August 2021

DRAFT HANSARD

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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HARRY MOMOS

Principal Parliamentary Reporter

SECOND DAY

Wednesday 11 August 2021

The Speaker (**Mr Job Pomat**) took the Chair at 10.a.m., and invited the Member for Nawae, **Honourable Kennedy Wenge** to say Prayers:

‘Papa God long Heven, mipela tok tenkyu long yu long givim mipela dispela dei. Yu bungim mipela long dispela Palamen, givim mipela gutpela tingting long stiaim dispela Kantri, imas ron gut, aninit long marimari na sore bilong yu. Long nem bilong pikinini bilong yu, Jisas Kraist, Amen.’

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON NATIONAL PARLIAMENT – STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Mr SPEAKER – I’d like to inform Honourable Members that Parliament has adjourned for a very long time since April 2021 and one of the main reasons being the Corona Virus Pandemic. During this period, we have experienced the death of one Member of Parliament and a staff member as well. Almost 30-40 per cent of our Members of Parliament were also confirmed positive with the Covid-19 virus. That is why we have adjourned for so long. You can see for yourself some of the work, as approved by the House Committee. I will later present a report on the brief statement that I have just made.

TABLING OF RETURNED WRIT – MORESBY NORTH-WEST

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I lay on the Table, the Return to the Writ, which His Excellency the Governor- General issued on February 25, 2021 for a by-election for the Moresby North-West Open Electorate following the death of Sir Mekere Morauta.

By the endorsement on the writ, it was certified that Mr Lohia Boe Samuel was duly elected as the Member for Moresby North - West Open Electorate.

Honourable Members, I have received the Return to the Writ and administered the Declaration of the Office on Friday 2, July 2021, at the State Function Room. I welcome the new Member of Parliament.

02/02

I would like to ask the honourable Member if he wants to make a statement.

**MAIDEN SPEECH – HONOURABLE LOHIA BOE SAMUEL –
MEMBER-ELECT FOR MORESBY NORTH-WEST**

Mr LOHIA BOE SAMUEL (Moresby North-West) – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise on this occasion to deliver my maiden speech to this Honourable House. Before I proceed, let us give thanks to the almighty under whose guidance and watch we continue to exist.

Let us also take time to acknowledge the traditional land-owners and people of Motu-Koita for the land, which this nation's capital is built.

For me personally, I want to dedicate today to my late father, Mr Samuel Rau Misi, exceptionally known in family as big Sam and to my mom Alice for their unselfish love and affection to me and my siblings in guiding us towards the right path in our up-bringing. Big Sam, I know that you are up there somewhere looking down today with that infectious smile, thank you.

Mr Speaker, at the outset, I wish to grasp this opportunity to thank my constituents in the Port Moresby North-West electorate, who gave me the mandate to represent them in this Parliament. From the length and breadth of my electorate commencing from Hanuabada, Elevala, Tatana, Baruni, Gerehu, Rainbow, Waigani, Morata, Tokarara, June-Valley, Hohola, Bens Peak, Murray Barracks, Four-mile Works and Garden Hill.

Mr Speaker, Port Moresby North-West is our electorate and during this brief period on the life of the Tenth Parliament, I will make every effort to all the powers vested me in to bring a transformational approach to our livelihood in the electorate.

Mr Speaker, with this short period in the Tenth Parliament, there is no time to procrastinate. There is work to be done and I must deliver those basic services that have been sadly lacking in my electorate for a long period of time over the years. It is my solemn desire to ensure that these basic services are accorded the greatest attention and are effectively implemented.

Mr Speaker, my immediate priorities focus on health, education, law and justice, the restoration of our economic infrastructure, empowering of our youth and our women in SME and other economy activities that will earn them much needed income to sustain their families.

Mr Speaker, I stand in this Honourable House as a true son of the traditional inhabitants and custodians of Port Moresby and I will progress the Motu-Koita agenda, which has long and on the back burner resulting in greater marginalisation of my Motu-Koita people over the past decades.

As moves have been progressed to have reserved seats for women in Parliament and demands by provinces to split and have additional districts, I seek this concurrence of this Honourable House to also establish a seat for my people of Motu-Koita.

Mr Speaker, Motu-Koita villages and communities have been adversely impacted and marginalised on their own land. This is due to the fact of the ever-increasing urban drifts by citizens to Port Moresby in search of better living standards. This has played huge strains on the public utilities such as electricity, water, government services and most importantly customary land and state land. As citizens continue to crowd the urban centres in an influx there is a shortage of proper planned and affordable housing to live in resulting in illegal customary land grabbing.

Mr Speaker, this is an alarming trend with no end in sight. Under my watch all illegal land grabbing of customary land must cease forthwith in my electorate. I will also work on the introducing appropriate legislations to ensure greater involvement of Motu-Koita people in business and spin off activities in the city of Port Moresby.

Mr Speaker, before I conclude and formally assume my rightful place in the Honourable House, I wish to thank the Leader of the Pangu Party and Prime Minister, Honourable James Marape for having confidence in me and endorsing my candidacy in the recent by-election for my electorate.

Thank you and I look forward to joining you all and contributing meaningfully as a legislator of our beautiful country, God bless.

03/02

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

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform the Parliament that the Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings met today and resolved that:

- a) The *National Broadcasting Commission (NBC)* will be allowed to broadcast live on radio, questions without notice as part of its community obligation; and
- b) The *National Television Service (Kundu2)*, *EMTV* and *TVWAN* will be allowed to telecast live questions without notice, for their purposes for the duration of this meeting.

CERTIFICATION OF ACTS

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform the Parliament that I have, in accordance with *Section 110* of the *Constitution* certified the following six *Acts* as having been made by the National Parliament:

1. *Electricity Industry (Amendment) Act 2021*
2. *Employment of Non-Citizens (Amendment) Act 2021*
3. *Immigration and Citizenship Service (Amendment) Act 2021*
4. *Kokopo City Authority (Amendment) Act 2021*
5. *Lae City Authority (Amendment) Act 2021*
6. *National Energy Authority Act 2021*

DEATHS OF FORMER MEMBERS – MR MALCOLM KELA ROY SMITH (EASTERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCIAL ELECTORATE) AND SIR JERRY KASIP NALAU (MOROBE PROVINCIAL ELECTORATE) – STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform the Parliament of the following deaths of:

(a) Mr Malcolm Kela Roy Smith, on 5 April, 2021, a former member for Eastern Highlands Provincial Electorate. He was first elected to the Seventh Parliament 2002 – 2007 and re-elected to the Eighth Parliament 2007-2012 for the same seat. During those terms he served as Governor of Eastern Highland from 2010-2012, Member of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts, Plans and Estimates, Culture and Tourism. Chairman of Pensions and Retirement Benefits and Deputy Chairman on the Parliamentary Referral Committee on Primary Resources; and

(b) Sir Jerry Kasip Nalau, on 5 May, 2021, a former Member for Morobe Provincial Seat.

He was elected to the Fifth Parliament from 1992-1997. During that term he served as Minister for Labour and Employment from September 1994 to July 1995. After the reform of the Provincial Government in 1995, he served the people of Morobe as Governor.

As a mark of respect to the memory of the late gentlemen, I invite all Honourable Members to rise in their places.

All Members stood in their places as a mark of respect to the memories of the late gentlemen.

(After a brief period of silence, the Speaker asked the Members to be seated and thanked the Parliament.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS (Papa Junior High School) – STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform the Parliament that teachers and students of Papa Junior High School are present in the Public Gallery. On behalf of the National Parliament, I extend to them a very warm welcome to the National Parliament.

04/02

QUESTIONS

Mr ALLAN BIRD – Thank you Mr Speaker. Before I ask my question, I wish to congratulate the new member on his elevation to this honourable House.

Mr Speaker, my question goes to the Minister responsible for the operations of the NPC, which I think in this case is the Minister for Finance and I would like the minister for Civil Aviation and Works to take note.

So, Mr Speaker, in 2019, there was a ground-breaking ceremony in East Sepik to launch the commencement of works into the rehabilitation of the Boram Airport.

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable Governor, Minister for Finance is not in the House. Redirect your question to the Prime Minister.

Mr ALLAN BIRD – Thank you, Mr Speaker. Then after the launching, I made a request to the then Minister and former member for Kandep, Mr Alfred Manase, that they focus on fixing the terminal first, which was in dire need of repair.

Since 2019, there has been no communications between the NAC, the contractor and East Sepik Provincial Government. Since then the former government decided to give several more contracts to the same contractor and from what I heard, is a Chinese contractor.

Mr Speaker, they gave them three bridges and a highway road to build and I understand that just recently, they also awarded them the Hawain Bridge. This is something that we had discussed at length in this House.

Mr Speaker, my understanding is that the CADIT program ends in November which means that the Boram Airport will be a failed project. I have observed that there is hardly anyone working at the airport or at the other contract sites for this contractor. This contractor is somehow, someone's favorite contractor and has been awarded all these contracts. You might just find one or two people working at the contract sites. So, all these projects look like they are going to fail.

05/01

NPC Criteria for Contractor

My questions are:

(1) What criteria does the National Procurement Commission use to assess the capability of a contractor?

Because in this case, they have awarded six contracts to one contractor in our Province without consulting us. And this contractor seems incapable of delivering on all the jobs.

Since my Province has been a bystander and it comes back to the issues, I have raised in 2017 about consulting with provinces on some of these things. Who checks the contractors? Is it the Department of Works, NEC or who does all of this? Because it's certainly not the province and yet the province is blamed when these contractors don't perform.

Cancel contracts for Hawain Bridge

In the case of Hawain Bridge, since we know that other projects are going to fail. Is it possible for NPC to remove that contract from this particular contractor because they still

haven't started and eight months has gone? Can we remove that contract from the contractor and give it to somebody else?

Mr Michael Nali – Point of Order! Mr Speaker, sorry for disturbing the Governor of East Sepik in his questions but the Hawain Bridge contract has been awarded to COVEC and as we speak COVEC is mobilising on the ground. In the last couple of weeks, I checked with them to commence but the process has been lengthy and a different company will build Boram Airport.

Mr SEAKER – Minister, your Point of Order is out of order.

Mr ALLAN BIRD – Thank you Mr Speaker, I note the point of order and I am pleased that it's a different contractor.

Having said that, my questions still remain from my understanding all these other projects have failed because this contractor doesn't have the capability to carry out these contracts.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – I thank the Governor of East Sepik for raising these questions. Firstly, I want to give assurance that before this Parliament rises these issues will be answered in detail. I will also make a statement in relation to it as well and in the context of Boram Airport information, this should be made available by the National Airport Corporation.

Whilst on that I also want to assure all Papua New Guineans that NPC and other development partners have been instructed to have a unified procurement process and not working in isolation as far as procurement of a contract is concerned. With this process in place, it will deliver accountability, efficiency and best contractor is selected.

06/02

Mr Speaker, let me assure you that I will give a full report on what is happening at the Boram Airport and also the issue of the contractors of the Hawain Bridge and the status as we speak.

Mr Speaker, it was remiss of me not to pay my congratulations to the Member for Moresby North-West. This is his first sitting in Parliament and as Leader of Pangu Pati and Member for Tari-Pori, I congratulate him of the highest order. I welcome him to Parliament

and look forward to working with him in representing the people of Moresby North-West. God Bless.

PASCA Gas Agreement

Mr CHRIS HAIVETA – Mr Speaker, I wish to direct my questions to the Minister for Mining and Petroleum.

Mr Speaker, I have brought my provincial assembly members three times to Port Moresby as per the direction of the National Government to sign the PASCA Agreement. The Prime Minister gave notice sometime back and we turned up but there was nothing to sign. Just yesterday and the day before, the company came out in the media about a particular PRL, Pandora. Yesterday they mentioned that they were not pleased with the agreements.

My questions are as follows:

- (1) What or who is this company?
- (2) Is the company in agreement with you to set these dates or not?
- (3) Is the agreement ready?

It is my opinion that this company is negotiating with you through the media. The implications of their statements are painting a bad picture when it comes to investors' confidence. To investors it will seem that our government is not genuine enough therefore they should not trust us. These implications are serious.

With the precedence of Covid-19 times, the Marape-Basil Government have set up Mark Bristow, who is the biggest gold miner in the world, to negotiate with the Cabinet. The company Total sent their vice president to sign agreements but how is it that the CEO of this particular company in question did not turn up?

(4) Can you tell the Parliament where the delays are and give us a progress report on the Papua LNG especially with the developing forums?

(5) Can you also give a commitment where our Government can finalise and complete this project before we go for our 2022 General Elections?

Mr KERENGA KUA – Before I answer the Governor's questions, I too would like to extend my congratulations to the new Member for Moresby North-West. I knew him well when we were still in the private sector. He is a fine strong man and also very professional in his career.

07/02

I would like to congratulate the member on finally making it through into politics, congratulations.

I would like to highlight that Motu-Koitabu as a district, and especially the local people always had big issues so that would be his challenge now so when issues are raised, both sides of this House must be all ears as this is part of our duties and obligations to address all issues concerning land ownership and other similar issues because we cannot continue to bury it and kick it down the road forever.

I also plea to the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Minister for Treasury and Minister for National Planning to please assist our Member for North-West Open as being mandated during this short term ahead of him.

Mr Speaker, going back to the important questions by the Governor regarding PASCA Gas Agreement negotiations, I would like to apologise to the people of Papua New Guinea, members of parliament and leaders of Gulf Province that on two occasions I announced the dates for the signing of the Gas Agreement but did not take place. You must all know that those dates were not fixed by me, nor the Prime Minister and the Members of Parliament. These dates were fixed by our advisors; State negotiating team and Twinza negotiating team. They had a meeting in the negotiating room and agreed on the said date for the signing of the Gas Agreement. A couple of times we made announcement of the dates with the Prime Minister. We were not in isolation we were acting upon the joint advice from both the Twinza and State Negotiating teams. In all those instances, I think two times, they underestimated themselves and their capacity to trace out all the details and when we, Political leaders make announcements on a definite platform or a timeline, you keep to that timetable. So, we were only acting on advice.

Mr Speaker, a unique feature about this particular PASCA negotiation is that these negotiations will allow all State agencies through the State negotiating team to take absolute control. Politicians such as Ministers and the Prime Minister and other politicians are not part of the team nor do we sit in the negotiating room. We only encourage both sides, set out perimeters and then they negotiate. So, that has been the case since then to this point in time and it won't change, because we hear a lot of critics when these processes are not respected and followed through. The State negotiating team will always be at the front table with Twinza as the developer and they will talk it through until an agreement is made and the hammer is slammed. That will be the time when we leaders will step in and discuss further on the outcome to finalise the project.

I would like to announce and apologise for not keeping with the timetable as scheduled. The negotiation did reach an agreement on what the State takes as this is the core part of the negotiations and for those of us involved in that process, we are satisfied and happy about what the State should take out of this project during its lifetime. However, from that moment, the negotiating details are then moved into the ancillary details, where the lawyers are involved and write up the full scope of the draft agreement and they do what is called "a page turn" the pages are turned one at a time to agree to all paragraphs to settle the whole document.

On Friday, a week earlier, the government side and the State negotiating team were advised on the agreement so they consulted the governor of Bank of Papua New Guinea, Commissioner for Internal Revenue Commission. Treasury Secretary and other advisors who then did separate analysis as per their own department rules and criteria. They then sent individual advisors to the State Solicitor.

08/02

The state solicitor then acknowledged it; and where appropriate made comments into the gas agreement and we have given the draft Twinza Team on Friday. We expect them to go through it and then give feedback to the State Negotiating Team and justifying the processes if it is agreeable or not then we have to correct it. Most of these details are ancillary to the core agreement about the state take, and there is no dispute on that.

The failure on their part is when they received the agreement on Friday, they went straight to the media. They did not go to the Chairman of the State Negotiating Team, to say they have received the agreement. There was no audience to say whether they agreed or disagreed, they did not provide an avenue for discussion but went straight to the media and tarnished the reputation of the State Negotiating Team and the other senior public servants, including the Minister. They tried to create a divide and rule scenario.

It came to the attention of the Prime Minister and he contacted me via WhatsApp and sent newspaper clippings and told me he was not happy on this matter. He asked me to deal with this matter and asked me to advise them to stop running to the media all the time. And that is what I did.

I contacted the CEO of Twinza via WhatsApp again and advised him to not always run to the media. We however expect both sides to have disagreements. And they arise to bring it back for discussions. Some of this information remain confidential, therefore there is no need to run to the media. As requested by the Prime Minister, I wrote a letter and should send it over to them maybe today again telling them to avoid media publicity.

However, yesterday at the PM's request, we met around 7.p.m with the State Negotiating Team where the state Solicitor, Mr Daniel Rolpagarea, was present and the State Solicitor proposed that, in addition to the letter, he will prepare a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement that must be signed between Twinza and the State so that people don't run to the media while the negotiation is in progress.

Once we have the final product, that's where the announcement will be made, so the State Solicitor is preparing that confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement to be signed as the negotiation start again. However, having said that, to give context to things, Mr Speaker, the negotiations have reached some months already and has I said, the core base of the agreements, we have confirmed. What is in the disputes is ancillary bits and pieces that should be a deal-breaker, but since they expressed contra-review, we said, someday, somewhere down the track, you've got to say, enough is enough and put it to an end because otherwise, it will carry on forever and will stretch it like a rubber band until it breaks. So we give them six days to seriously get into the discussion, both SNT and Twinza.

By the sixteenth of August, they must make some meaningful progress and if they don't, then State does have an alternative option if they don't cooperate. We don't have to be soft all the time, sometimes we have to be stronger and say, look, we cooperate well but you take us for granted and pull us into the bush.

Sometimes, we have to pull back and say enough is enough.

09/02

So, after the fifteenth the Government will reconsider, whether we should continue the negotiation or we suspend or terminate that whatever will to consider if at that point in time. So, we have to be firm about this negotiation because if we don't, we will be taken for a ride forever. so that is where we are and hopefully within the remaining days, they will have a manful discussion.

on Pandora, I want to make it clear in this Parliament that the negotiation underway is in respect of the licence area called PASCA. Pandora licence has expired and because as nobody owns it,

it comes under Papua New Guinea Government. many have applied for the licence, but it has to go through separate statutory process through the Department of Petroleum, what Twinza wants and they have their valid reasons, and I won't bad-mouth them is to have both PASCA and pandora licences as to aggregate to create bigger volumes and bigger revenue and business for all of us does not have merit. however, whether that should happen or not? Should

be desired by de ceased an independent process. We cannot bring Pandora together with PASCA.

Pandora must go through separate process, so whatever the Petroleum Advisory Board has recommended to me, and in whichever way I go, there is still an opportunity for Twiners to come in. if the Petroleum Advisory Board says that Twinza gets it, they will. And if another applicant gets it, they will still be invited Twinza. So regardless of whichever way, all of those people who are seriously interested can have a role to play and we will facilitate that, but we will be breaking our own laws when in our negotiation with one licence we bring in another to negotiate as one. we must keep them separate and apart, so Pandora is still pending, we haven't decided. let us firstly deal with PASCA.

Mr Speaker, I'm happy to say that the Vice President of Total Energy flew in from Singapore yesterday, despite all the Covid restriction, this investment in Papua Gas Project is serious enough to warrant the vice president on the Global Business, Asia Pacific, to meet with the Prime Minister and I. he has given us assurance that they have started work on the pre feed process. The work has started, and once they conclude by end of this year, the actual will start on October or November. That will take up 2022 and by 2023, there will be in a position into final investment decision. Once they cross that line and secure financing the construction will begin in 2023 going forward.

Mr Speaker, I met them this morning they gave me the continued assurance that this project is on the priority list. Now to reach the development forum states, before we come to the development stage where we meet with Gulf, we must complete the social mapping and landowner identification and all these must be complete, the big part of this process has been completed.

10/02

We must complete social mapping and landowner identification. The big part of this process has been completed. I want to assure the Governor of Gulf through the Chair that we are ready to finalise this process but there is a Court injunction that is stopping us from continuing, for several months now.

My department has been trying its best to remove this court injunction as it has been sitting there for months now. We have filed an application and the National Court will now have a chance to hear our application to see whether the injunction will continue or be removed. We will know the outcome by tomorrow. And if we are successful all these things that the Governor is enquiring about will be finalized.

We are finally on track for *Papua* LNG to proceed and what we will do finally because all these projects under my ministry are important. I have prepared a Ministerial Statement to be delivered to this Parliament after being approved by the Cabinet. This statement will outline the status of each of the projects that are important to this country.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS (LLG Members from Ijivitari Electorate) –
STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members I acknowledge the presence of the Members of the Local Level Government of Ijivitari in Northern Province in the Public Gallery and I would like to on behalf of the Parliament make them welcome.

Supplementary Question

Mr FABIAN POK – My questions are in relation to the Twinza Gas Project whose data is based on one drill only. Unlike the Hides and Papua LNG, you have to use more than one drill to certify the reserves. After you certify the reserves, then you will come up with reserves such as Hides based on 72CF and in Papua they are based on 648CF.

And to work out the revenue it is based on the total CF of the gas and oil in the ground. What is the real figure that is being used, because they are only using one drill and this cannot show the actual oil and gas capacity that is contained in the ground. More than one drill has to be used in order to quantify the reserves. It was on these grounds that I refused, that they have to use more than one drill on the ground. What reserve figures are you using to calculate the revenue that we could be receiving, in terms of royalties to the landowners and how much the state will receive as well as the company?

This is because everything must be based on the reserves.

The second question is in relation to an advertisement in the papers on the sale of the Twinza oil and gas fields on the New York Stock Exchange

11/02

That is the whole reason why we must not give them production licence. They must not sell but to develop. I just found out that they do not have the capital to do all these. In the agreement, if their finances are okay to develop then they can bring partners in or they can sell.

It is very important to manage this because, we might issue them the licence, sell it and then we face these problems again.

(3) Are those reserves calculated enough for going into production or not because, it is based on one drill?

Last time you mentioned that gold is not struck only in one drill. You have to do enough drills to calculate the amount of reserves. So, this is very important to the country.

(4) Can you stop this practice so that it is not repeated in future?

People might build a well and ask for a licence and we have already set up precedence which would be bad for this nation.

Mr Bryan Kramer – Point of Order! Sorry to interrupt your questions. As we are approaching the last minute of the Question Time, I just want to move a motion to extend Question Time.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, there is still time available. After the Minister responds to the questions then anyone can put that motion.

Mr FABIAN POK – We must not set a bad precedence in the country to any oil or gas company to come to drill a well and request for a production licence. They might take advantage of it and we will be left out.

(5) Are you sure that we have drilled enough holes to make sure that the data and the quantity reserves are enough for us to give them the production licence otherwise they might sell?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – EXTENDED TIME FOR QUESTIONS

Motion (by **Mr Kerenga Kua**) – agreed to.

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent time for Questions Without Notice this day being extended by 20 minutes.

Mr KERENGA KUA – Thank you, Mr Speaker. The questions that the Member for North Wahgi has raised are all good because they are directed at managing our risks when you move out into this sort of business that the government has regulated.

Mr Speaker, I think I have responded to these questions raised by the speaker before him. Is it okay to respond again, if so then I will answer them.

Firstly, let me respond by saying that it is incorrect of saying there is only one drill but, there is more than one drill.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, many Members wish to ask questions so we have extended time for question. I think it is fair if you can respond in brief or in a written answer.

Mr KERENGA KUA – Okay. I will respond in brief. I want to make it clear that even with only one drill, it has discovered huge commercial reserve. You can proceed to development stage without putting the second drill in. There is no law that prohibits you from doing more than one drill. It depends on the volume discovered.

The volume we are saying here is 400 billion cubic feet. It is enough for the project so they have gone ahead with the project.

Secondly, if there is money for the developer than they finance the project but not fully. They usually go out to seek for investors to buy some equities so that they can work. So, there are risks and it is normal just like PNG LNG and Papua LNG. These are all joint ventures.

So, Twinza Oil Company, might not have the capital to do it all by themselves, but they will ask companies like Kumul Petroleum, MRDC and other investors to come in and share the risks and profits together. It is normal in this type of business.

12/02

Mr DON POLYE – Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is directed to the Prime Minister and is in regard to the Bougainville Issue, as it is one of the most important agenda in Papua New Guinea.

We all know Bougainville is an Autonomous Region of Papua New Guinea and is not a country. I think this Parliament and past governments have worked prudently and carefully in addressing the Bougainville Issue before the Referendum that took place so now that the referendum has been already accomplished the issue had become more complex. This issue is very sensitive and delicate so this Parliament and the people of Papua New Guinea should put

complete trust in the Prime Minister, Honourable James Marape and his Government in addressing the issue.

The interest of Bougainville and Papua New Guinea is multifaceted and we have the confidence that it is the intention of the Prime Minister to inform the Parliament of the outcome of the Bougainville Issues that were discussed in Wabag, recently.

I believe that it is very important that the Parliament understands the proceedings that are discussed at such meetings so that we are guided. The Parliament guides us through to the executive government in an amicable manner. At the moment we still think that Bougainville is part of Papua New Guinea.

When we come to the Voting on the Floor of Parliament by this House, what will be our focus?

At this juncture, I would like to commend the Governor and the people of Enga for hosting this meeting that took place in Enga. Please inform the House of the outcome of this meeting.

Thank you, Mr Speaker

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Member for Kandep for asking this question. It is a very important question. In fact, there can be no greater issue facing our government or country than when one part of our country has decided to break away and be an independent nation.

I have ranked this challenge the greatest over Covid-19, the economy and many other challenges we face today. The sanctity of a union as one nation is very important so I will briefly answer this question. But, be assured that by next week I will be presenting a Parliamentary Statement on what has transpired in as far as our discussions in Wabag, following on from our discussions that was held in Kokopo.

So, just to refresh the Parliament and our people of the conversations that are flowing on from the Referendum that took place in 2019, is a product of the 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement. It should be called Papua New Guinea Peace Agreement because at that time clash was between the rest of Papua New Guinea and the issues that were on the ground in Bougainville but nonetheless as it is commonly known as the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

In 2001, under the leadership, of Sir Mekere Morauta, Bougainville and Papua New Guinea agreed to surrender all guns and go through a peace process and so this Peace Agreement was signed. It was decided that there were three main things that would take place during a period of 20 year from 2001-2021.

- (1) Peace, for all Bougainvillean's to return or surrender all the guns,
- (2) Autonomy, for Bougainvillean's to have full autonomy arrangement, and

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(3) Anywhere in between this period we must have a referendum for the political future of Bougainville.

These are main three agenda tied into the 2001 Peace Agreement and to get the political future of Bougainville there must be a referendum. This question of referendum is whether they will get independence or not. And so, from 2001 many of us were not Members of Parliament and this process is on foot and by 2019 the Referendum was held.

This Parliament or our government for that matter had little choice but to deal with the issue of referendum because it is the key requirement of 2001 Peace Agreement. And so, in 2019 we had the process of referendum to go ahead and under the process of referendum they have voted with two choices whether they will get independence or greater autonomy.

According to these choices we are aware that United Nation, Observers and through the democratic process the people of Bougainville went through the voting system and 97.7 % voted for independence. Now the problem is this our *Constitution* does not allow independence to occur in one part of our country.

But to follow the agenda of 2001 Peace Agreement this process is on foot and I recognized the efforts of past successive governments and ministers who worked on this sensitive issue and each and every one of them handle it with due care until our time.

And after referendum and to the wisdom and I pay commendation and homage to those who offered the 2001 Peace Agreement. They said whatever the outcome of the referendum is, it will be ratified in National Parliament.

I thank the people and leaders of Bougainville for their understanding and agrees that the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea is the final place to deal with the issue of Bougainville. I want to inform Parliament today that as Minister responsible for Bougainville Affairs, in the last few meetings that we held as far as entire cabinet and government, we maintain the spirit of 2001 Peace Agreement but we handle it with due diligence until the meeting in Wabag.

For the first time since 2001 there was recognition on both sides clearly with undisputed fact that there is silence in the *Constitution* for independence in Bougainville. In fact, there is no provision for independence and Parliament is the place if we were to progress independence in Bougainville then the matters has to be addressed in National Parliament.

There was no total clarity except the use of the line it must be ratified by National Parliament but in Wabag consultation we advanced the cause into clarity that National Parliament will get involved to deal with it in constitutional manner. Bougainvillians have a view that ratification of the result meaning that National Parliament will affirm what took place insofar as referendum result was concern.

Mr Speaker, I thank the Bougainvillian leaders who came to Wabag for them to fully understand and I have clearly stated to them that I as Prime Minister I have no one man right to say that you can get independence. No individual citizen in our country can say that you can get independence. It must come through a Constitutional process

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But let me assure this Parliament that I must get approval from the country as a whole. No one should say that they will get their referendum first and later consider independence which the *Constitution* doesn't allow for it but issues of Bougainville is exceptional.

Therefore, the rest of the country must not advocate on following their footsteps, you can talk about autonomy functionally but not about autonomy and associate with independence.

It's not an easy task and legal pathways must be cleared first for necessary amendments to take place. But only the Parliament has the authority to decide the future political settlement of Bougainville in respect to the choice they have made.

So, Mr Speaker I will present a statement on this issue next week to clarify on what eventuated in Kokopo. When I went to Arawa to receive the referendum result I made a statement saying that I am taking this result as Member for Tari and not as the Prime Minister of this country, although I occupy both office, meaning that Parliament has the final say on this referendum and not one member, minister or one Prime Minister for that matter because it's an important issue.

I want to assure the country that we have now set out our next five year work program. When we met in Kokopo we discussed the 2001 Peace Agreement on issues between them and us, which they wanted the consultation to stop in 2022 and consider independence but we asked for a second consultation.

Don't ask me why because these are sensitive issues and we have to treat it diligently. You and I are not in Bougainville all the time and don't understand the sensitivity on the ground. There are lots of issues which predates during the crisis time and many people died. Therefore their issues are far different than what we face here.

I appeal to this House that due care and sense of responsibility must be given. They have voted for independence but our *Constitution* doesn't allow for independence but they have agreed in Wabag that due process must flow in terms of national consultation.

The borders of this country were secured through national consultation prior to independence and the *Constitution* defines the borders of this country. The same process must be involved if we are to unbundle the present border we have.

Mr Speaker for the first time we have clarity and they understand that *Constitution* will be amended if they were to get independence. And consultation must be made again with rest of the country if they want independence. And it will take time and go through due process till 2022, 2023, 2024. And Parliament will look into it but they have requested for 2027 to be the deadline which will be the Eleventh Parliament.

The President and his team wants political independence and we agreed for political future for Bougainville, these are two different words and meaning. And so these are issues that we need to handle with due care and my Government is doing that.

But in the meantime, I appeal to all of us to step up on both sides in a bipartisan approach in whatever capacity we can to support Bougainville fully by assisting and rebuilding Bougainville and we have made additional

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But in the meantime, I ask each and every one of us to step up in a bipartisan approach in whatever capacity we can to fully support Bougainville. In 2010, during the JSB Meeting with the Treasurer then Honourable Peter O'Neill was able to commit K100 million a year to them and inform the then Prime Minister to make commitments.

We are revisiting all the commitments that we have made in Bougainville. We are starting to honour all outstanding commitments. We have made a K100 million commitment every year since 2020. We have started giving this money in 2020 till 2029. Independence or not, Bougainville is our responsibility. They are carrying some of the legacy of some of the public policies that we have inherited. We are trying to change for the better so that no landowners and provincial governments are left behind.

Mr Speaker, in response to the question by the Member for Kandep, and I thank him for that question, because Bougainville is important. They have voted for independence and we are treating it with due care. The processes that will be involved in 2022 to 2026 have been

clearly laid out and I will inform the Parliament next week. We will then progress the future of Bougainville and Parliament will be the place for these discussions.

Supplementary Question

Sir PUKA TEMU — There is a Cabinet approved structure for consultation. Unfortunately, the way the so-called consultations are taking place is not the way through the JSB process. There is a misunderstanding on the path of the Prime Minister and his team on using the JSB as the consultation process. The process is a group approved by the Cabinet to go around the country consistent with the understanding of the lack of the provision in the *Constitution*. There must be that consultation going on in every province on the mainland. The two executive governments cannot make the decisions and or manage the process. It has to be outside of them. Therefore, Mr Prime Minister can you correct this?

Mr JAMES MARAPE — I thank the Member for Abau for his counsel. He is correct and let me inform the Parliament that the JSB process is different from the consultation process. What we staged in Wabag was joint JSB that took place earlier and consultation that took place after.

Mr Speaker, let me inform the Parliament that we are not illiterate in the process. We are very much literate in the process but in the interest of cost saving and time management we are starting the process of consultation now. We have successfully secured now that the process of consultation will run its course. It was diligent and was not easy. They came to the table with all arsenals firing for independence. These meetings were running concurrently or back to back.

In the Wabag Meeting, clarity was made and we will now allow for consultation to run its course on its own speed consistent with timetable. Let me inform our senior that we are very mindful of what is consultation and the difference between consultation and JSB. We were running them side by side. It was not 1 meeting in Wabag neither was it 1 meeting in Kokopo.

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Mr BELDEN NAMAHA — My questions are directed to the Prime Minister. Before, I do that, I would like to take this opportunity for and on behalf of my family and people of Vanimu Green Electorate and the Opposition to congratulate the newly elected Member for Moresby North-West, the Honourable Lohia Boe Samuel. Congratulations!

Secondly, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a very interesting observation in this Parliament that we have decided to build cubicles for ourselves in Parliament. I hope we have done the same thing to improve health facilities and put latest state of art equipment and medicines and beds inside the hospitals in our country.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, my questions are related to Covid-19 vaccination rollout throughout the country. We are told that some 200 different vaccines were being rushed to production in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic. About 50 of these vaccines have undergone trials and only a handful have now been approved for distribution among the populations throughout the world. These vaccines are made in many different ways to trigger different responses by the immune system on the human body to contain the Covid-19 virus. At this point, we do not know which is the best for our people.

Mr Speaker, today, we have AstraZeneca made in England, Chinese vaccine Sinopharm, and the latest is the United State's Johnson and Johnson vaccine. I do not know how many others are in our country. Each pharmaceutical company in each country is racing to get its vaccines rolled out in the world. Even companies in this country seem to be marketing vaccines through promotions and competitions rather than getting health outcomes from our people. Some companies are refusing unvaccinated staff on company transport or access to discount or even giving them company loans. Others are making it conditional that only vaccinated patients or persons will be employed, forcing those how do not want the vaccination to be vaccinated against their will, or else face job loss.

Mr Speaker, with the nationwide rollout of vaccination in the country, the Government must answer some very important questions so our people can be aware of the Governments position on the vaccination rollout.

My questions therefore are these:

(1) Has the Government approved one vaccine or a number of vaccines for Papua New Guineans who wish to be vaccinated? Or are we accepting every vaccine into this country like we always do with other products? If we have chosen one or two vaccines, what are the reasons for our specific choice of vaccines?

(2) Have there been any tests carried out on approved vaccines to see which is acceptable to our people living in our social and climatic conditions.

(3) Can a person vaccinated by one type of vaccine safely get his or her second or third dose from a different type of vaccine? How do we know that it is safe because each vaccine is made differently?

(4) What is your Government's stance on Covid-19 vaccination? Is it compulsory or voluntary?

(5) If its voluntary, then why are some private companies now making vaccination compulsory and are making it a precondition for continued employment for our citizens?

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(6) Mr Speaker, is your government aware that some companies are even offering compliments with the vaccination. A company advertised that you pay K100 to get vaccinated, you will enter a draw to win.

Mr Speaker, if your Government has made a stance that vaccination is voluntary then what are the penalties for companies forcing our citizens to undergo vaccination under threat? Many employees are being forced to take the vaccination and if they refuse, they will automatically be sacked from employment.

Mr Speaker, are we going to sit back and allow these companies to suppress, intimidate and discriminate our citizens. What is the government's position on vaccination in our country?

Mr Speaker, are these provisions of the vaccination rollout in our *Pandemic Act*, if it is not, then why are private companies making it mandatory for our citizens? This is a direct breach of human rights in our *Constitution*.

Mr Speaker, we must always remember the oath we took when we took office as Members of Parliament, we swore on oath to serve our God, our Queen, our people and our country. It is our duty to protect our citizens. Our primary duty as Members of Parliament is to live by the oath that we took.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Speaker. Let me thank the Opposition Leader for asking these questions on Covid-19 and vaccines.

Firstly, let me put out a disclaimer, I am not a medical doctor to answer precisely to the details that he wants but we will get the National Control Centre and the Health Department to make an appropriate response especially on the details of what vaccines we already have in our country and what vaccines are approved to be rolled out. As far as I know there are three or four vaccines that WHO has certified and sanctioned to be used in our country.

The AstraZeneca vaccine was the first to come into our country and then the Pfizer vaccine, the Johnson and Johnson vaccine and the Chinese vaccine.

Mr Speaker, in my knowledge, four were approved I would like to clearly state that the Controller, Mr David Manning does not dictate the National Control Centre. We may be the first country and possibly the only country that have passed a *Pandemic Act* to ensure that we have a synchronize address to Covid-19. When Covid-19 arrived in late December of 2019, none of us knew what Covid-19 was. When the whole world was crumbling to have individual, national address and response to Covid-19 we too, had to do an absolute best.

Mr Speaker, some of us here are saying that we are playing politics but our people's lives are at risk. It really saddens me that the Opposition Leader could be demean and question the health of all Members of Parliament when we are doing the best of our ability to construct Parliament to operate in a safe manner.

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Mr Belden Namah - Point of Order! Put medicine in the hospital and build state of art equipment in the hospital that is my point. I'm not demeaning the health of our Members of Parliament. We members of Parliament should be equally responsible for the health of our people in our country.

Mr SPEAKER – Point of Order is out order! The statement made is earlier was sarcastic so has responding.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Speaker, the Opposition leader questioned why the was installed, he seems to think that we said we ran away from the Vote of Confidence in the April. No!

Mr Speaker, in April when we came, he forgot and he was disrespectful to the family of late honourable Richard Mendani who pass away, because of Covid- 19, he was disrespectful to the Members of Parliament who are seated here working under exposure of Covid-19 and disrespectful to over 40 per cent of the Parliament staffs in April.

Mr Belden Namah – Point of Order!

Mr Speaker – Ruling. Honourable Opposition Leader, unless I allow you to raise your point of Order, only then can you speak. This will be your last Point of Order.

Mr Belden Namah – I'm simply asking the prime Minister to answer the questions and not come up with rhetoric in Parliament.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Opposition Leader, you raised those rhetoric questions and he simply responding so your Point of order is out of order.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Speaker, he raised six rhetoric, questions, which I will respond to in a hopefully non – rhetoric manner. Covid-19 is not rhetoric. when Covid- 19 first fake news. came to PNG. Covid- 19 patient Rita Flynn or in the hospital, we challenge him, go visit them, go exposed

Mr Speaker, today as we speak for 200 million people globally have been exposed to the foundation Covid-19 very strand has also other strands involved merged as far as Covid-19 is concern. So, for Mr Opposition Leader to question the intelligence of you.

Mr Speaker, to come up with this innovation to put this work in place safety in place from the last I visited, only two other parliaments have done this globally.

Mr Speaker, for working to ensure that Parliament is functional with Covid-19 consciousness.

Mr Speaker, I would like to also commend you and the Clerk for installation of ventilators to clean the air.

Mr Speaker, in April, we heard 40 per cent of Parliament staff tested positive on Covid-19, one of the Parliament staff died from Covid- 19 and a Member of Parliament as well. who died from Covid-19, so you want the Parliament to be non-functional? We have to be functional and we allowed the Speaker and the House committee.

Sir Puka Temu – Point of order! the Minister is going all over the place. He did promise us that he will get his technical team to answer the question. Can we stop him. look at the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister, that they are not wearing mask, they are talking to each other.so the installation of these cubicles useless.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Speaker, I would like say that Honourable Sir Puka Temu should know that I am vaccinated. He is a doctor and he should know that.

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The Honourable Dr Puka Temu should know that I have already being vaccinated. We are joking about this but to be pumping money into this exercise we have already put K2 million each to the districts of Vanimo, Abau and in fact all other districts. The Speaker, also got some of these money and put it here in the Parliament.

I want to ask the Opposition Leader, with this money have you given it to the Hospital in Vanimo? The people of Vanimo please ask your good Member. The people of this country must ask me and all the Members of this House for K2 million which was budgeted and given to all districts. People of Vanimo Green ask Belden Namah, what he did with the K2 million for your district which was allocated for the purpose of Covid-19?

Mr Speaker, I am not a medical doctor to make expert comments but the National Control Centre is run by a team we set up in the last two years; to ensure as a country we approach this pandemic sensibly. We are also trying to balance between opening the economy. The same voice that is saying no is the same voice that is saying no to every proposal that we put on the table to balance between our economy being alive and the health of our country and our people.

Mr SPEAKER -The Chair will interrupt the Prime Minister. I wish to tell those of you in the Public Gallery that you are not allowed to take photos in the Chamber. And also please all mobile phones are to be switched off.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you Mr Speaker, I wish to say that the pandemic is no laughing matter. About 400 million people are confirmed to have been infected and over 30 million have already died. Over 200 deaths have been reported in PNG and over 20, 000 people in PNG have been confirmed to have contracted the virus. The government is trying its best to ensure that we address it and we have since given K2 million to all districts. This was for you to have a basic response set up in your own districts. The provinces were not over looked, each got something to help in our efforts to control the pandemic.

There are four types of vaccine now in the country, that is approved by WHO. And from the National Control Center. It is not only David Manning and his team who are working, we have what is called MISEC, we have all our specialist doctors, like Professor Nakapi Tefuarani, Professor, Sir Isi Kevau, Professor Everlyn Lavu and Professor John Vince and a whole medical team of specialists also from IMR in these MISEC team. They are there to advise the National Control Center on issues relating to Covid-19.

And they are very much aware that these four vaccines are in the country. We are not doing anything in isolation, and I have little medical knowledge therefore cannot question the knowledge of these people, most of whom are professionals in their respective fields. If these learned people have advised me that the vaccines are okay to be imported then who am I as a politician, who is uninformed in this area of medicine deeply to question their judgement on these vaccines.

The Honourable Member of Abau was with us earlier in the process, in fact one of the great advocates of vaccination. We knew when the pandemic hit our shores that the world did not have a cure. So, we went on a stiff measure and we all went on a shutdown mode. Not everyone was aware, therefore even the world was not ready to shut down its borders as early as January 2020 but we did it on record. We stopped flights from China in reaching our shores. Later within the year we re-opened so that the economy and the health of our people is balanced.

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Thank God our country is still functional and nothing to do with me as Prime Minister. Our father in Heaven is still watching over our nation and I thank God for that. At the same time, I would like to inform you all that vaccine is here and it is not compulsory. That is our policy.

When the vaccine is available, it is the responsibility of our government that the vaccines are distributed to our health facilities. It is up to you, whether to take it or not. Those who refuse will have to adapt to the new normal as instructed by the authorities and stay away from exposure. It is a freedom of choice given by our Father in Heaven, but it was our responsibility as a government to have the four vaccines accessible and available here in the country for the people to choose.

Going down to the employers, it is their responsibility to ensure their safety and not the Prime Minister to decide. Especially the private sectors, they wanted to resume duties, we told them that the vaccine is their choice whether to take it or not. But, it is their responsibility for their own safety by deciding and following the new normal practices.

Every employer in my record has indicated to me that they comply with the voluntary vaccination option. They have also indicated that if the employers get Covid-19 and do not go to work, they get time off from work. It depends on how their institutions protocols are being set up.

Mr Speaker, I would like to clarify to everyone that our government is absolutely doing everything possible within the threat of devastations caused by Covid-19, but we are still functioning and trying our best to help our people to live accordingly and make good choices for their health.

As part of our policy, vaccines are now on shelves for anyone to take according to their will and not by force. I have been vaccinated and I am a Christian who believes in science and research also. I took the AstraZeneca vaccine which has 0.04 per cent side effect. I live in PNG and I am exposed to everyone. For me, it was better for me to be vaccinated and do my work then avoid the 0.04 per cent side effect. That is why I made a choice to get vaccinated. It is up to each and everyone of you to get vaccinated. We will not force you, but we are living with Covid-19 and we need to be careful so that we do not get the virus or spread it.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Vaimo-Green for raising his question, but sometimes asking questions for the sake of asking better be stopped. The country has national issues and let us find combined solutions together.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Sitting suspended from 12 noon to 2 p.m.

21/02

**PERMANENT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARLIAMENT
– REPORT ON THE NEW NORMAL PERSPEX SITTING LAYOUT IN THE
PARLIAMENT CHAMBER – PAPER AND STATEMENT –
REPORT ADOPTED**

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable members, I present to Parliament the Report by the National Parliament Committee on the Perspex solution, new sitting layout in the Chamber.

The committee met on Wednesday 21 and Monday 26 July in Parliament. The minutes of these two meetings are attached in the report.

Honourable members, the long adjournment of Parliament from April 21 to August 10 2021 was the approach the National Parliament took solely to contain the spread of Covid-19 among the members of Parliament and the staff of the Parliamentary Services.

At the beginning of this year over 50 percent of the Parliamentary Services Staff, including some members of Parliament had contracted the Coronavirus. This number was a

concern for the Speaker of Parliament following a letter from the Controller of the National Control Centre.

With the long adjournment the National Parliament has taken the Covid-19 pandemic for a fact that it is here to stay. Views and ideas were sought by the Clerk of Parliament and his Senior Management Team on the appropriate measures to take at the National Parliament precincts to further control and contain the spread of the Coronavirus.

Honourable members, the following measures were taken at the National Parliament, prior to and during the adjournment:

- a. Wearing of face masks in the National Parliament precincts as mandatory for staff and other occupants of the building
- b. Conduct of temperature checks for staff and visitors entering the building.
- c. Disinfection of corridors, tables and chairs and building as a whole, twice a week and this is currently ongoing.
- d. Compulsory Covid-19 testing for all Parliamentary Services and Members staff.
- e. Voluntary vaccination for staff and members Staff and members of Parliament

What the Clerk and the Senior Management Team further considered was on what measures to take in the Chamber where all Members of Parliament sit together.

The Covid-19 pandemic around the world has become a serious health issue with detrimental health effects that has greatly influenced and altered the normal way of life and the global economy. It affects and alters the fabric of human civilizations and interactions that have been practice for many countries. Compounded with such health crisis, countries are now embracing the downfall of their economy and those immediate effects on the general populace as a direct result of more and more stringent measures and lockdowns that are regularly enforced by authorities to curb the rapid rise in the infected persons and Covid-19 related deaths.

Honourable members, there were three (3) options put forward to the committee and they are the applicable measures to be taken by the Parliament in the Chamber and or during the meetings of Parliament.

1. Virtual Parliament

This involves the use and access of video conferencing for MPs. This is the most widely used method by Parliaments in Australia and the New Zealand Parliament for members to conduct themselves in their meetings. It involves a lot of knowledge and technical assistance to organize the video conferencing facilities.

2. Chamber Perspex Solution

This will provide for the placing of glass stands on every member's seat in the Chamber. The glass stands will separate personal contact between members in the Chamber. This measure is used in the parliaments of Singapore and Malaysia.

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3. Relocation of Seats to the Gallery

This will require the relocation of sitting arrangement for members in chamber up at the Public Gallery. This will see some members sitting up at the Public Gallery seats. This is done as part of the Covid-19 restriction on 1.5 meters spacing. Out of the 140 seats in the Chamber, only 66 will occupy the seats there while other 45 will have no choice but to relocate up at the Public Gallery.

Honourable members, when considering the three options to be used in the Parliament Chamber, the committee considered and endorsed the second option — Chamber Perspex solution. Apart from the other two options, the Perspex solution is a simple and easily fixed measure that does not require or involve much technical or expert assistance. It will be welcome by the MPs than the other two.

With the virtual Parliament the committee notes that it will require MPs to first undergo some training and second to know how to use the video conferencing facilities. Most MPs will not have good accessibility to internet services in their electorates as it is the source through which the video conferencing will work.

With the relocation of seats in the Chamber, the committee notes that the relocation of members up to the Public Gallery will beat the purpose of members been elected to Parliament. The committee observed that elected members will be more reluctant to sit in the gallery. As far as their constituents are concerned, their elected representatives must represent them in the meeting chamber.

Having endorsed the Perspex solution measure, the committee requested the AR Innovations Limited for the demo setup in the Chamber. The demo setup will give the committee the opportunity to see first-hand how the set up will look like and the type of materials that will be used. The AR Innovations Limited is the company that will provide Perspex solution in the Chamber.

Honourable members, on Monday 26 July, 2021, the committee inspected the demo set up of the new layout in the chamber and ARC Innovations Limited. The company set up a

demo layout for the 60 x 60 cm of glass barriers and 60 x 40cm glass barriers. The glass barriers will be positioned on every member's seating position.

From the inspection, the committee agreed that the 60 x 40cm glass barrier is more appropriate to use in the Parliament Chamber. Issues considered for this measurement to be agreed on include the visibility of the members and the barrier from one member to another.

The committee on the other end noted that while the glass barriers will separate members when they are up standing there will be no barriers when members are seated in their chairs. The position of glass barriers is only on table but when members are seated there is nothing separating one from the other. The committee view this as an overlooked matter that beats Perspex solution measure to contain the spread of Coronavirus.

The committee then resolved that the Perspex solution may not be the perfect measure however, it is right and applicable measure to use in the Chamber. The committee further held that given the limited time before next meeting of Parliament (August 10th) it is important that the National Parliament employ protective measures for the members. This is to show that Parliament is concern about how serious the Covid-19 pandemic is.

Honourable members, the committee recommends that:

1. Parliament adopts the Perspex solution sitting layout in the Parliament Chamber which now you all seated.

2. Parliament and its members and staff, Parliamentary Services staff and visitors to the building to continue exercise the Covid-19 restrictions of handwashing, mask wearing, social distancing, compulsory testing and get vaccinated if need be.

I commend this report to the Parliament.

23/02

Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY (Kavieng – Minister for Treasury) – I move --

That the Parliament take note of the Report and it's recommendations.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, may I commend the Speaker, yourself and staff of the Parliamentary Services for the construction work that commenced immediately after Christmas and of course the House Committee for taking this Covid-19 pandemic very seriously and making changes to this House, which to some it may look funny but to the rest of us we think this is right interventions.

I want to bring back Parliament's memory to seriousness of Covid-19, especially how it relates to my portfolio and challenges the Parliament and staff faced when trying to prepare us for the session.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if we can just wind the clock back to last year 2020, which most of us will recall, Covid-19 first appeared in the media stating that it originated from China. The Marape Government responded quickly with a *Pandemic Act* being passed in April 2021.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will present a detailed statement on the breakup of how we used K5.7 billion tomorrow and later will present a major statement on the economy.

But I want to remind all of us in this House that with the onslaught of Covid-19 last year in the first quarter, the world economy had lost K38 trillion. That would be K38 thousand billion of about 420 PNG economies wiped out in a quarter. The US stock market over two months period lost 25 percent of its value and the largest in stock market history and dragged the rest of the world with it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, here in PNG we face our own challenges. And if you can recall we have announced on several occasions that we have to look back at our Budget and review key numbers in relation to revenue and we had reduced revenue but revised revenue down by about K2.7 billion last year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it created major challenges and I know that there has been a lot of questions on where the K5.7 billion, economic and health response money went to. As I mentioned, tomorrow, I will present a detailed statement on the breakup. But could I just assure all members of Parliament that with the K5.7 billion package allocated to protect the economy of our people, if we didn't protect the Budget than what would have happened?

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If we didn't protect the Budget and economy, what would have happened? We haven't had a discussion on that and I am disappointed when I hear discussions coming from various circles of government complaining about the increased debt.

Mr Speaker, if we had not responded very quickly with our economic response package, what would have happened? If I can bring us back there. We would have failed to pay our public service wages of some K185 million a fortnight. This would mean we would have to lay off doctors and nurses which would mean fewer frontline workers at our hospitals which would have resulted in more than the reported 18 thousand infected cases today and around 200

deaths. These figures would have been far greater. We would have reduced the number of policemen then our law and order situation would have been far worse.

Mr Speaker, we don't speak much of that and tomorrow I will detail more of that so as to bring the attention of Parliament and our country to exactly where we were when Covid-19 came in. I don't want to pet ourselves too much but look at some of the things that we were doing under challenging economic times. We had focused GDP for this year to be 3.5 per cent, we have reviewed that when I table my report at the end of August. You will see that that number has been revised to touch below two per cent.

Mr Speaker, during these very difficult times, just to give you an idea and to appreciate some of the really good work I felt that this Government had done is to have a look at some of the key matrix and compare funding to two previous years before this Government took office in May 2019. In a quick summary, you will see that with our capital budget those funds that we used for PIPs, building roads and projects. Before we took over, the previous Government, had funded about K10 billion for projects. Immediately after we took office, our capital budget we would have spent K18 billion. That is a clear increase of K8 billion by this Government compared to the previous Government. We did this with revenue revised down by K2.7 billion.

Mr Speaker, I know that some are very concerned with the increase but so are we. But can I remind members of Parliament that my primary role as Treasurer is to protect the Budget. In protecting the Budget, my role is to protect revenue. It is to ensure that our revenue forecast are met under very difficult circumstances. If I can't get revenue going internally then I have got to find it somewhere else.

I have got to find it somewhere else so that we can continue implementing our budget and letting lives in our country continue.

25/02

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have got to find somewhere else so that we can continue implementing our budgets and letting life in our country continue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I don't like debt like anyone else. From my background, I would have to say debt is bad if the cost of your interest is less than the investment but if it is higher, I will have to say; debt is good. And we did quite well in relation to that.

I will table more tomorrow on what we did there.

In concluding, just to share with the Parliament some very important metrics which we don't get a chance to open in our statements, concerns with our debt ceilings, under our Debt Control Laws, the *Fiscal Responsibility Act* you will recall looking back to the last four years

when we entered this Parliament our debt to GDP ratio was sitting at 30 per cent which in the Budget if I recall correctly in 2018 was increased to 35 per cent and when we came into office we increased to 40 per cent and then with the onslaught of the pandemic increased it to 60 per cent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, currently if you look at our debt to GDP ratio, we are projecting this year's it to be 51.8 per cent and declining over our five-year fiscal framework. So that is responsible budgeting and very challenging under very difficult circumstances but we have laid some concerns and even fear amongst members of Parliament. Sometimes it is good to compare our country with other countries around our region and with some of the large more sophisticated economies.

When we talk about debt to GDP, let us have a look at some of the increases around our region; with Papua New Guinea, in 2018 up to our due diligence exercise, if you all recall, we re-collaborated those numbers and we had a debt of GDP to 38.5 per cent approved by the IMF it increased to 39.8 per cent in 2019, 49.2 per cent last year and this year forecasted to be 51.8 per cent, an 11.7 per cent nominal increase. Let us compare ourselves to Australia, they started off in 2018 at 41.7 per cent, jumped to 47.5 per cent in 2019 and last year to 67.5 per cent so they had a 9.8 per cent increase. And Fiji, who normally compare to us as one of the better managed economies, they increased from 46.4 per cent in 2018 up to 83.6 per cent this year; an increase of 34.7 per cent. Japan, the second largest economy, increased by 21.6 per cent. Remember, we increased by 11.7 per cent. The United States of America, the largest economy in the world increased by 24.6 per cent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to assure members of Parliament, we are managing the Budget under very difficult conditions. We believe that we are taking a responsible approach by managing our debt but most importantly we need to ensure we get our economy growing again and on my second statement to the Parliament, I will detail more.

Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for spending the money well, K10 Million. I see many changes in addition to what I see in Parliament and I look forward to further discussions with the Speaker and the Clerk on any further assistance that you may require from the Treasury.

Thank you.

Mr DON POLYE (Kandep) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will speak on the Covid-19 and some of the issues raised by the Treasurer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, sometimes it is easy to be wise after the incident. Something happens and after that it is easy to be wise because you have seen what has happened but it is

very difficult. Government is very difficult to run, the Prime Minister being the Prime Minister and running the Prime Minister's office is not easy and challenging. Every government has their own challenges that they face. I say many of us are here to provide leadership, governance at the same time bring in the goods and services to the people of our nation.

I do agree and support this paper that has been presented by the Speaker. I also do support what the Treasurer has said but also give some honest views of my own as to what I see and as to what Parliament can do because Covid-19 is a one-off event, it is here to stay. This is quite important because this paper titled, a New Norm like everybody else in the world is saying so I think it is worth discussing this paper and what has taken place so far.

While I stand to support the Government and what the government has done so far on this unprecedented pandemic that affected Papua New Guinea's economy, the system of a governance and everything else and the Budget, I also like to say that transparency is very important. It is a very important principle that every parliament of a country, every government must be able to explain how you spent the money. I do agree that the K5.7 billion that has been spent to protect the Budget is a very good idea.

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Because when you see business declining. The investment climate is attracted by this epidemic, you find investors are not coming in and you have the influx of foreign capital that should come into the country to the extractive industry.

Agriculture, manufacturing investment, and whatever investments will bring in the foreign capital, and when those have declined then you must continue to maintain your essential services and invest where your economies have grown locally away from the impact of external investments coming in.

So, I think the K5.7 billion spent by the Government to support the budget is a good idea at a time where you find your cash flow is down. When the cash flow is down, what do you do? You only spend K5.7 billion on just building hospitals or just buying vaccination, but what you do is also spend more on other projects or programs that will create accessibility to our people to maintain their well-being, growing the economy and also invest in those areas that you can have a return in the next 10 to 20 years you have to create local economy because Covid-19 is here to stay so the focus should not be overlooked for the old traditional way of doing things.

That's what treasury is saying and we believed it is moving in the right direction, but we are also happy that most of our people are asking questions since they don't understand covid 19 and therefore K5.7 billion has gone to Covid -19.

Like I heard this morning, the Honorable Leader of the Opposition asks a question. That could be the question in the minds of many Papua New Guineans. Therefore, the Treasurer says, he will give a report and articulate carefully and comprehensively as to where that money has been spent in supporting the budget.

So, we believed that's the right thing that is announced and that will be delivered and this Parliament can take responsibilities to disseminate the fact and the truth to the people and put to rest some of those questions that are in the minds of people especially, in the social media.

Mr Speaker, I say this because of the current times, not like in the past where you just come, sit the Parliament and go home to the electorate and discuss the issues. Before we discussed the issues with the people in the electorate, the people already know it. Because the trend of the technology, the technology is already there. The other thing about it is that some of that knowledge is not truthful knowledge.

They psyche up people and at the same time while we believe the approached the Government has taken in approaching the direction with the treasurer giving the detailed report. I think some of the questions raised, including the point raised by the leader of the opposition is while you can make all these boxes for Members to sit in, we hope that you would have done something for the people as well.

The Government has spent K5.7 billion, taken care of other areas, but not the rural places. The point that the Treasurer mentioned about sending a detailed report will take care of any questions that may arise doubts and queries or allegations. Let me also say, on protecting the budget, we are lucky the pandemic has also commanded the international community to help developing poor nations, we have seen some support coming in, which is lucky, but it will not always be big. We will have to create within ourselves a system in the economy that can support and sustain Papua New Guinea.

Even when the revenue is going down, the country must have a way of making sure that we cushion the decline in the cash flow.

27/02

We should take note of this because we seem to repeat the same mistakes over and over again. I don't think this Parliament should make the same mistake. In the future, this

Parliament should set a better focus than how we as leaders have conducted ourselves in the past. Why do I say that? There is a Sovereign Wealth Fund; a fund that you created to sustain the economy, the funds on the side alternative to the budget you have. The proceeds you get from the extractive industry, you park in Sovereign Wealth Fund. It stays there, you invest, you save and support the budget.

In such time of pandemic when you see is a deepening in the cashflow, you release money. Your money may be invested offshore, or can be within the country. So you release the money to make sure that the shock is cushioned and the cashflow is maintained. The fluctuation in the cashflow is not so much high or so much down and the economy is stable. You can be able to provide the recurrent expenditure and be able to provide for your development programs because your funds are sitting there, wisely managed, invested prudently to support your budget.

This alternative has always been there, we have to look at some ways of supporting ourselves. We cannot continue to live on a daily basis. This is crisis management approach that we always do time and time again for the benefit of this Parliament as well as the people of Papua New Guinea. We should know how to manage ourselves and I think that we should resurrect the Sovereign Wealth Fund and make use of it.

Let us look at a more sustainable economy and the cashflow for many years to come and properly manage them. Let me also say that your medium-term development strategy, medium term fiscal strategy and medium-term debt management strategy are very important.

You cannot run your economy devoid of a guiding tool to follow that particular road map to achieve your mission. So, these things are not just there because we would like to make it look like we are smart. No, they are there to guide us, the Ministers and the Government because we are under political pressure all the time. The voters demand for roads, bridges and other services where you are under immense pressure. That is why you refer to the policies to guide you through. We have to learn how to work within the policy framework and spend the money accordingly.

This is not to say that only one government does that. I have seen various governments of the day do it. I do not dwell too much on the debt issue because as the Treasurer said, the debt is good if you spend productively to get good returns on them rather than spending on consumables only.

So, I don't want to dwell on things that other governments have done but for instance if I may take UBS Loan. It is an issue that I want to humbly take on; not trying to point fingers

to anybody, we all make mistakes and we have made mistakes but I am talking with a view that we learn from them.

So, when you take a big chunk of the budget and invest it into something that is not good for Papua New Guinea thus digging a big hole in the budget, that does not go away because you will have to go back and borrow again and again by a country that has a fragile economy and a cashflow that is not consistent because of plummeting business activities. To fill that hole, you have to borrow at a cost and I can go on and on for ever.

28/02

With a country whose economy is fragile and a cash flow that is inconsistent. With a business climate not so strong it is even worse., because if we have to fill that hole we have to borrow, and when we borrow, we borrow at a cost. This goes on forever, but what is happening now is that, we knew the consequences involved at the time you took the loan.

It is an ongoing problem of governments in the past, this wrong decision has continued and we now have a saturated problem and we do not expect the government of today to create a miracle overnight. It is not a problem that started yesterday. It is a problem that has been there and everyone has given a hand to either manage the problem through good governance or eliminate the existing problem. That is the entanglement that we have gotten ourselves into.

I think it is time for us to learn and correct and one way to learn is through the Sovereign Wealth Fund. The other thing I would like to mention is the politics, like the Vote of No Confidence and the instability that is created. With due respect to all of us. I did pursue the Vote of No Confidence before but if you do some calculations to how much money has been spent that is not budgeted for within the context of policies. And that have been spent beyond the debt management strategy, and outside of the fiscal management policy, meant for development spirals out of control within that period.

We do not realize because we are under pressure to hold onto the Government or change it. We have to also have some discipline and as leaders we have to understand these things; because whatever action that we take thus lead to certain consequences, which later could harm us. So, those are some of the things that we can do if we would like to protect our budget; we have to be disciplined as intelligent and wise leaders, we must see the nations interest ahead of foul play and other things.

You are probably thinking, I was an Opposition Leader and was responsible for calling a Vote of No Confidence; yes, but I think it has come to a point that before we go into the coming Elections, to have our mindset changed.

Mr Speaker, no in relation to the current pandemic, I would say I am not anti-vaccination. I support vaccination and that it has a purpose. I got vaccinated against most of the diseases that we are required to get vaccinated against such as polio, hepatitis and others. I prefer to protect myself and I am happy. But when I received those vaccines there were confirmed and factual scientific pieces of evidences for me to be convinced to receive them. I am intelligent and not stupid, I cannot be led, I live my own life. Because, I am leader whom people in my electorate, community and family look up to. I analyze the facts before acting. And so, with this vaccination, I would like ask the controller and the Prime Minister who mentioned all those prominent doctors, to do some assessment. For instance; why was it reported so strongly when the virus was unknown to the world and WHO. And the idea of vaccination and all the other measures were introduced to the country and every doctor that was there, created a perception that all will be buried in a mass grave. And that we will be dying like those that we saw on television in other countries.

29/02

So, the fear brought into Papua New Guineans was so immense and doctors will know. I am not a doctor so I do not want to speak like them, but general knowledge tells me whether it is a placebo effect or nocebo effect.

The placebo effect is when you feel that you are well and happy even if you are being infected with diseases, because the scent of your positive mindset heals you. That we cannot deny.

Nocebo is when you are ill, but someone will give you negative thoughts. That is nocebo and doctors know about it. That is a scientifically proven fact.

The Human mindset works according to the influence and the impact of the environment or the knowledge brought before it. This believing mind believes what it is being told without even analysing it.

In this country, we must accept the fact that no mass graves have been dug for Papua New Guineans yet.

Let me say one more scientific fact two which I know and I would like to say I am not a scientist, but I know this fact. Look at my body, the colour in my skin has melanin. If you send me out to the sun, I won't get sun burnt or sun cancer. But when you send an albino Papua New Guinean out to the sun, they will definitely get skin cancer and their eyes will turn red.

This deadly virus has affected a lot of human beings. Papua New Guineans are not Americans. We are not Europeans. We are not Australians. We are Melanesians with melanin

in our body, we are different. Why, I wonder if the sickness came in, have I sent only 10 dead bodies from Port Moresby to Kandep, and none of them died of Covid-19.

We Papua New Guineans should play our intellect. We should not follow the world. We have a natural immune system in us that we should strengthen. Health and fitness must be strengthened in every Papua New Guinean because that is more important. I think the good book somewhere says that the power within you is greater than the power of the world.

Your immune system is not powerful because of all the junkie food you take. I think the government should have the policy on health and fitness, healthy living, good eating, and dieting. Look at the natural way of Papua New Guineans; no Papua New Guinean to be honest, has been buried yet with the direct infection by Covid-19. I say it strongly because I have been sending bodies home.

So, I accept that we do vaccinate because some of my children are very weak in their immune system. They need to get vaccinated because I raised them in a modern society. If my natural immune system is strong, Mr Speaker, don't force me to be vaccinated because my immune system is stronger than the vaccine.

Just understand the signs and follow. Do not drive an agenda because the rest of the world is doing. I am running out of time, thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr LINO TOM (Wabag – Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I take note of the statement made by yourself and I also take note of the statement made by our Treasurer.

I would like to take this time to make a few statements concerning Covid-19 and the signs behind it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a lot of mis-information in our society. Covid-19 is caused by a novel virus, meaning it is a new virus and the signs behind it is still ongoing as we speak. Now as we know, a lot of the vaccinations that our country carries out is based on research that has been done over so many years. Usually the research done over so many years are statistically proven and they go through a lot of human trials that takes years for results to be made known to the public.

Covid-19 does not present us with death opportunity. Covid-19 does not give us that opportunity for us to make those long researches that go over so many years. What we have right now are evidence which we call anecdotal evidence meaning that, they are not well established as yet. Does that mean that we have to wait for evidence to come before we start

vaccinating our society or people? We cannot wait because Covid-19 is real. We have seen people die of Covid-19. So, we are faced with the dilemma right now.

30/02

So, this is why it is called a Novel Virus meaning it is a new virus but we are actually already facing the impacts. We getting reports that people who have been diagnosed with Covid-19 are actually dying from the virus.

As a responsible government we can't wait for more people to die and we start making decisions. We can make decisions on the evidence we have on hand.

Now, there is another trend of thoughts that some people are saying that we should wait for the well-developed countries to find a solution but it is immoral to use other countries to be lab rats and upon their findings we make decisions for our people.

It is evident that this disease does not give that window of opportunity. When it started coming most of our population with existing comorbidities (people who are vulnerable due to other medical disease) are prone to die.

So, because of these factors, as a responsible government we have made some decisions based on the anecdote (evidence that is not statistically valid) but those are the only evidence that we have.

There has been a lot of misunderstanding in the society and sure enough everyone has a right to their own opinion. There is so much evidence available to us from being exposed through technology at our disposal. But we all must understand that medical knowledge must be interpreted based on a contextual (medical context that is found), information which is readily available on the internet. This is not what you think it is so, it is better to get direction from our medical expertise.

I would like to provide a contrary view towards my colleague, Mr Don Polye, I think what the Government did the most responsible thing. Any government would have done it under the situation we are being faced with. So, as leaders when we make statements people are bound to believe us. There is so much conspiracy theorist that are making videos and uploading on the social media platform that we have in the world today.

The most important thing is that we must have a body that can provide us with the medical expertise which will disseminate information to our people. As I speak there is so many people or organisations giving information which is confusing the nation and this is why the vaccination roll out program is not happening as we anticipated. The vaccination will not

prevent people from catching the disease but if you do there will be at less risk of you transmitting the virus and dying from it.

So, one of the Public Health Measures that should have been taken was that vaccination should be compulsory.

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Public Health measures that would have been taken was to impose compulsory vaccination. Because, whilst we say we have right those people who are ill and those people who are more vulnerable have rights to live too. When you don't vaccinate yourself, you become a risk factor to this individual who has a right to life.

So, the *Constitution* also provides for compulsory vaccination if the nation wants to take that pathway, because those vulnerable people have a right to life. When we don't vaccinate ourselves, we become a risk to public health.

So, please when we talk about this issue, it would better for us to have the facts coming from MISEC; the group of people who are actually sanctioned by this government to provide that information. When we speak one voice, we don't confuse our people and we save our people from the threat that is quite imminent in this nation today.

Thank you, very much, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DAVIS STEVEN (Esa'ala) – Honourable Members, I also rise to express my support for this report which has been presented by the Parliamentary Committee on Parliament as part of the duty of the Speaker and the Clerk to ensure that the leaders are protected and our roles as legislators are enhanced.

So, my contribution to the debate is to acknowledge first of all that the system in Parliament is at least working. It is important that in times of crisis, especially in this case where we are dealing with health crisis, allow our system to function. As the treasurer was trying to explain. In our combined interest and the interest of our people as leaders, we must bring an open mind to how we deal with these issues.

My first point in this debate is to make sure that we focus our contributions to the purpose of this report. I can see a very clear effort on the part of my good friend Treasurer to present his ministerial statement in terms of the economy which he correctly says should be predicated upon the MYEFO. This is a legal requirement upon the government to place before Parliament

and we can all debate. And of course, my good friend Minister for Fisheries, in his response to the leader representing our people in Wabag.

The thing is that when we start to move away from systems and structures established to perform these functions then we open ourselves as a government to criticism. For example, when there is a scientific body appointed under the *Pandemic Act* to be reviewing scientific data, research, analyzing and doing the necessary scientific inquiry into these issues that is the only body that ought to be recognized and that body's report ought to come to this Parliament.

Because Mr Speaker, when the Honourable House passed the *Pandemic Act* last year, there was a very clear resistance from Members of this Honourable House. Many were wondering how that legislation was going to impinge on our people's rights, including the freedom of choice we are now talking about, their liberties to move freely, their right to refuse to subject themselves to scientific or whatever examination.

32/02

For instance, when the Medical Research Institute (MRI) setup by statute, a law passed in this Parliament and yet it's not functioning, which means the scientific evidence is not coming out from that institution. Why is it not functioning? And haven't I read and heard correctly that whilst the MRI is there, we are now giving money to new scientific groups coming up. Our people are entitled to ask these questions. What is happening and how are we managing the pandemic crisis?

Mr Deputy Speaker, this honourable House exercised the mandate of our people in passing the Pandemic Bill under very difficult circumstances. And I rise to acknowledge that very quick thinking and positive decision making by the current government which I was a part of. This prevented excessive damage or negative outcome that other countries faced.

But when we passed the Pandemic Bill, there was a clause in that bill which was inserted because members of this House said, accountability and transparency. We didn't want to use the pandemic as an excuse to abuse public monies. And so, if you read that legislation carefully, there is a process of procurement.

That legislation also says that the report that ought to come to this honourable House must have audited financial statements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that's the expectations from the leaders from both sides of the House and our people as well. So, when I looked at this report, read and saw the appendix now where in the report explains how they expended these monies, perhaps in the future.

I have been in this House for almost eight years but haven't seen a financial statement or report presented by the Speaker of Parliament. And now in this period of pandemic when money is in short supply and we are managing a very tight budget like the Treasurer has mentioned, accountability becomes primary and is paramount.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Committee first sat in July 2021, when did we first take action in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic after the adjournment in April. The unprecedented lengthy adjournment which we took to protect ourselves. And I acknowledge the merit of the argument that leaders should not be exposed unfairly or unnecessarily. But I want to also argue that we had ample time prior to this sitting in April to make the necessary preparations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this report doesn't tell us when exactly the Clerk of Parliament took receipt of the monies. And by how much and how did they procure all the services. Because on the Hansard, Mr Deputy Speaker, the assurance was made by the Honourable Speaker, that there will be an investigation into earlier allegations of monies being spent in this House. I appreciate this cubicle and the report says that we have drawn from the example of Singapore and Malaysia, but I want to know how much was paid.

33/02

But, I want to go further and say, how much was paid and how much have you used? Under the rules or *Standing Orders*, there is also a Parliamentary Committee on Legislations. So you take the physical action to protect us but if there is money available then that permanent committee must meet to review the *Pandemic Act*. This is because our people are not satisfied preserving ourselves but also in making sure that we lead this country decisively. Why I say that is because many today think that the Pandemic Act has become the basis on which our people's rights and livelihood can be affected.

For example, this morning with the responses of the Prime Minister, I could see that we have got an issue. On the one hand, we can say that vaccination is an option and not compulsory but on the other, we are saying the employer decides. We are leaving it to employer to decide. The Deputy Prime Minister and the leader of the party representing our workers ought to be jumping up and down. This is something that is creating a lot of uncertainty in the workplace.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us also consider our schools. What about our school environments? What if a teacher shows up next year and says he will not teach students who are not vaccinated? This is not rocket science. With the greatest of respect, one Parliamentary

Committee has said to take steps to protect us. The next one ought to convene to review the law and the *Pandemic Act* in particular so that we send a clear message to our people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if you look at the example of Singapore, it was only a few months ago that the Singapore Government decided that they had enough of the myth. Here we are talking about an advanced economy, an advanced health system and a government that has the capacity to source the best range and get the empirical evidence in science. They decided it was enough and reopened their economy. They have left it to individuals and their health department to manage the epidemic. If the committee had looked beyond just the glasses and cubicles then we would have seen good examples of how this Honourable Parliament can be providing the leadership that we need beyond 2021 going into the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, finally, I want to express my concern about the confusion that is now going on in relation to whether the vaccination is compulsory or not and the fact that our people believe taking the vaccine is offending our Christian faith. Let us face it, this is a challenge that was not within the anticipation of our founding fathers. Those who are said to draft the *Constitution* of the country in 1975 did not anticipate a time and challenge such as this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is therefore the duty of Parliament to rise up above our indifferences, perhaps laziness, excuses and use the session now to get answers on these very important issues that will regulate our country in different sectors. Thank you.

34/02

Mr POWES PARKOP (National Capital District) – Thank you, Mr Speaker, for presenting this report before the House. Before I give my views, let me also congratulate the newly elected member for Moresby North-West, Honourable Lohia Boe Samuel.

Mr Speaker, he has a short time and we the Ministers are here to help him deliver in this short time. I would like to give him the assurance and I look forward to working with him to deliver for Moresby North-West.

Mr Speaker, coming back to the topic, about the report, I arrived a bit late so I did not hear the Treasurer's speech but I can see the report from the Parliamentary Committee.

Mr Speaker, as you can see, I was a member of the Committee but for some reason, I am recorded as absent for that meeting but that aside, the important thing is, Parliament through the Speaker and the Committee has taken a step to show that we are serious about responding to Covid-19 and protecting the Members and allowing us to come and have a meeting.

Mr Speaker, the protocol that is in place is the same protocol in April, we cannot meet over fifty people in one gathering. You would need to get the approval from the Controller or you take steps to show that you are responding to Covid-19. The House Committee had no choice but to put in place this mechanism.

Mr Speaker, the alternative of course is that all Members should put all reservations aside and get vaccinated. The Prime Minister got vaccinated in March and, the Minister for Justice as well. We got the second dosage and we are still here, right here with you all. There is no side effect and if there were side effects globally, the Prime Minister told us today. Its scientifically proven to have 0.004 per cent risk, this is literally low. If you walk around Boroko, today it is highly likely that you might be attacked by some people or a taxi might run you over.

The more important thing is that we as leaders are supposed to convey a strong message to our people, a positive and higher message, not a message that comes from conspiracy theories that Bill Gates is behind all this, or our DNA will change or succumbing to superstitious beliefs. This is not the time and age for us to propagate or hold onto this type of views.

Mr Speaker, sometimes we ignore these views that is why our development is very slow, because we are always superstitious. Now, with due respect to the Member for Kandep, I am yet to see a super immune system, like how our is body is stopping us from contracting TB, Cancer, HIV and Aids or Malaria? I haven't seen it. Evidence around the world shows that Covid-19 is for real and now the different strand is affecting all our neighbors. In Indonesia, 1000 plus are dying every day, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia too is being affected, they had to shut down Sydney because they want to protect their people and that decision was protested against but sometimes when you are in a position of leadership you have to make some decisions that might not be popular but it is for the good for the long term for the people of this nation.

Mr Speaker, I do not have evidence but what I do suspect is that, these countries that have contracted the Delta strand, they allowed these well-off people from India to travel in their jet to Malaysia or Indonesia, Thailand, Australia or Fiji and that is how they got infected.

In PNG, you can talk, we can talk including the Opposition Leader, but we must give credit to the Prime Minister for making a tough decision, even I know because I reside with him at NCC.

We are not scientists, not even doctors, but he has to go by the decision of the scientific medical community and even for some of the decisions the Prime Minister himself might have some doubt, but its based on concrete scientific evidence, based on data and our people may not like those decision but think about the flip side.

What if Prime Minister listened to our people and the claims of these conspiracy theorist regarding the virus, what will become of us? It will be highly irresponsible for the Prime Minister to listen to this type of sentiment so I want to commend the Prime Minister, even the Member for Esa'ala talked about the *Pandemic Act*.

Of course, when we passed it last time, we all had issues and so on, but these unprecedented times require us to make an unprecedented decision. I don't think this type of law will never be passed again. The Prime Minister will be irresponsible and the Government will be irresponsible to ignore the concrete data all over the world.

America has been affected, Europe has been affected, Asia has been affected and Africans though they are black through they will be resistant to the virus but look at them. They are dying now from Covid -19.

But the Government has decided in January last year, even I complained to the Immigration Minister as well people have gone out for holidays and want to come back, why are you closing the borders let them come in but he was adamant. He wanted to protect our people and our country. That decision, is the reason why we are safe now I would like to impress on all of us that we are safe because the Government made the tough decision and not because we possess super immune system that protects us against this virus.

We have to give credit to the Government, especially the Prime Minister. A lot of people have spoiled him with all sorts of allegations, but he was steadfast and that's the right decision to make and we must have the audit. It is not about the Government or Opposition but it's about the life of our people and our country.

I would not suggest to the Government to take another course. The narrative that I have to make known now again Member for Kandep, is to look at the world now. Over two billion people are being vaccinated. Two billion people, almost three-quarters of China. Now you look at the United Kingdom, they reach the top level of vaccination almost 60 per cent.

They are relaxed, the business is operating as usual, people are returning back to their normal life. They can take the chance and risk because they made the hard decision to immunize everyone and as many as possible. Now the conversation, the statistics that are coming out of the United Kingdom is about how many have been vaccinated.

They are no longer talking anymore about how many are dying or the infection rate. Mr Speaker, that is the conversation that we should have be, that should be the dialogue. We should be having with our people. If we became Thomas to prove everything, just look at what is happening in other countries, did they die while being vaccinated? Come on, rise above all these kinds of superstitions.

Nowadays, we are in the digital age. In social media, every man and woman are pumping out whatever they want to chunk out. Some of them are not great inventors or most enlightened people, they have not discovered anything in their life, their life is probably pathetic. Yet, they chuck out anything that is coming from their position while they sleeping in their houses and have different kinds of thoughts and spit it out for granted.

Mr Don Polye – Point of order! The Governor, should be addressing the Speaker not the Member for Kandep. I raised my view. I like to strengthen my view that it was not based on superstition.

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They should be addressing the speaker, not the Member for Kandep. I would like to strengthen my view which was not based on superstitious beliefs but on scientific facts. There are profound prominent scientists worldwide who have taken a different course on the same subject. There is no concrete traffic knowledge on this.

Like the Member for Wabag has said, it is still being studied and why should you so harshly impose vaccination on those whose immune system is already strong in PNG. We should be silent and like the Prime Minister has said, it is not compulsory. And there are facts there and I did not raise any points that were based on superstition.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Member, your Point of Order is in order. I will ask the Honourable members to refrain from mentioning your name and address the speaker directly.

Honourable members, when referring to other members debates, they have the right to express what they have on the Floor of Parliament. And maybe you should refrain from that and address the speaker, as you speak.

Mr POWES PARKOP – I already elaborated on the point. The scientific evidence is new but if we look back to 2005, in the US, President Bush Jr. already knew that the Influenza pandemic will come in the future and they prepared for it. They did not take his advice and now they are facing the consequences of not doing so. It was based on scientific proof. Covid-19, is a gradual evolvement of bird flu, SARS, et cetera and in Africa, they experienced the Ebola and the Cholera virus, so, the scientific community had already been working.

This is not something new, these are types of influenza too. These were studied and they were being prepared; so, there is some level of concrete medical scientific evidence already present.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are so many critics, saying so much, so I acted like a guinea pig and got vaccinated. And I am still waiting to see if my DNA will change. Whether I will be in the one world government like Bill Gates, as many are presuming this virus to do. Maybe if I join Bill Gates, maybe his government will be a good one too. It will be a smart government, because he is a smart guy.

Why can't I join him? My hair might grow again. But on the contrary, nothing has happened to me. And so, unless we have other alternatives, I am a testament to the immunizations or vaccines. Those of us who were born in the colonial era, in the 60s. Australia did not ask our parents or give reasons as to why we should be vaccinated. We were only made to line up and we received those vaccines whether we liked it or not. We received all these vaccines, from small pox to chicken pox, tetanus, and all of it, I got it and am still alive. And we are now afraid to receive this Covid-19 shot.

Now the Governor of East Sepik does not want to get vaccinated. What if there's a breakout of measles in the province. And this is because of such low-level conversations. Just like some doctors are continuously going against the idea of vaccination on social media, I refuse to identify them but they are not practicing medical professionals. Some of these are only promoting the herbal medicines. That is why they are against the idea of getting all these medications. These scientific proven medicines have not been created for nothing, they are through God-given talent. For instance, Pfizer has created a vaccine that is capable of waking up the dead. Did you know about that; and that is the blue medicine. And now it is now here with a vaccine to protect us and we having so much doubt about it.

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It came from the same source and if you all think about it logically, which company will put its reputation on the line to promote the vaccine that will kill people, it will put companies like Johnson & Johnson out of business.

So, let us all get over this drama, Mr Prime Minister, you are doing the right thing. I would like to leave an impression for all of us to not talk too much and lead our vision and go and get vaccinated. The Leader of the Opposition if he was on this side of the House, he would be encouraging everyone to get vaccinated. This is not about politics.

Mr Deputy Speaker, last month I sent a message to the Speaker and Clerk on how we were going to convene the Parliament when the protocols are still in place because I am the Chairman of the Task Force here in Port Moresby.

In April when I said to shut down because of the protocols in place, you were all against the decision claiming that people were not getting the virus but we experienced two deaths resulting from Covid-19, the newly elected Member for North-West father and the Member for Kerema. So, what more evidence do we need?

Let us all be leaders; our Prime Minister is providing leadership so let us all support him. Leadership also means making tough and unpopular decisions.

Mr Prime Minister, keep on going, we are all here to support you.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

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

Motion – That the Report and its recommendations be adopted – agreed to.

Report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 3.31 p.m..