

FOURTH DAY

Friday 13 August 2021

DRAFT HANSARD

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CORRECTIONS TO DAILY DRAFT HANSARD

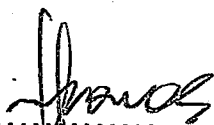
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HARRY MOMOS

Principal Parliamentary Reporter

FOURTH DAY

Friday 13 August 2021

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

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

Sitting suspended.

The Speaker again took the Chair at 10.45 a.m. and invited the Member for Pomio, Honourable **Elias Kapavore**, to say Prayers.

‘Sovereign Lord, we thank you for today and for giving us this mandate to lead your people. We thank you Lord, that you are the God of our nation and our people. We thank you and ask that today in this session, you will lead us in our discussions; so that the decisions and debates we’ll conduct here today will bring peace and harmony to our people. Lord, we want to thank you today for giving us hope, and we ask you to lead all of us present here. We thank you for the people that we represent in this country. There are issues that we will raise and Lord we ask that you will lead us by your power. Lord there is none like you, we thank you and we commit our lives to you; this is my humble prayer to you Lord. Amen.’

VARIOUS PROVINCIAL VISITORS TO PARLIAMENT – STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform the Parliament that Chiefs of Bogia District, Madang Province, the Mayor of Popondetta Town, Ward Councillors from Ijivitari District, and officers from the Gazelle District of East New Britain are in the Public Gallery. On behalf of the National Parliament, I extend to them a very warm welcome to the National Parliament.

QUESTIONS

Health – Human Resource Planning

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE – I would like to direct this question to the Minister for Health, and ask the Minister for Higher Education, Research and Technology to take note. Papua New Guinea has about 500 medical officers serving the public health system. And we have a population of about 8-9 million people in the country. The doctor to patient ratio is one doctor to about 7 000 or 8 000 people. The UPNG School of Medicine and Health Sciences can only produce up to 40-50 medical officers annually. This trend has not changed since 1959.

This system is compounded with a huge challenge of our population growth of about two- per cent annually. This year was a successful year for Divine Word University and for the first time 14 new doctors graduated from this institution who were the pioneers of the program that started in 2016.

The success story came about when the Dean of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Professor Tefuarani, who is also the chairman of the Medical Board went to the Divine Word University to accredit the program. This arrangement paved the way for these 14 students to graduate this year.

02/04

I thank the Minister for Health for addressing this matter which is now in the Notice Paper, for a review of *section 24* of the *Medical Registration Act* that will allow medical students who are graduating from other universities to register under the Medical Board in the country.

Mr Speaker, apart from the medical officers, we still have critical shortage of human resource in the country in terms of health workers. At the moment according to WHO statistics, we have approximately five health workers serving a population of about 10,000. At the moment we have about 17,000 positions in the government health facilities and only 56 per cent of these positions are occupied. We have more than 30 community health posts that have been constructed by the ADB; we have new health centres and district hospitals constructed. We also have a big hospital being built in Enga Province and this poses a huge challenge for critical human resource planning by the Department of Health.

My questions are:

What is the department's plan in addressing this matter to capture the increasing number of graduates?

What is the National Department of Health and the Government's position for the request to have the University of Papua New Guinea School of Health Science and Medicine become a standalone University?

Can the Minister confirm if the new National Health Plan has been launched?

Mr JELTA WONG – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the good Member for Pomio for bringing the three questions to Parliament. I have a statement to present next week which will answer these questions in detail. But, just for today, I would like to say in regard to the question about the department's plan to increase the health workforce in the country, the Government has put together the National Health Plan. I will answer two questions in one sentence.

The National Health Plan will be launched in the coming months. Within the National Health Plan, the 10-year plan from now until 2030, the plan is to ensure that we double our workforce within our country. And whilst we are building infrastructure in the country, we have also thought about the training of our people within Nursing Schools and that is why the Bill I will present next week is very important. The Medical Registration Bill allows for students who have studied under Divine Word University to be eligible to work within our country.

We also have plans with the Ministry of Higher Education to work out how we can push into the future in terms of training. The plan is there, I hope to elaborate on this when I present my statement next week Tuesday.

03/04

Kwamje Sakapana Development Association

Mr BENJAMIN PHILIP – Mr Speaker, I wish to raise this question to the Minister for National Planning and ask the Prime Minister to take note of the question.

Mr Speaker, can the Minister for National Planning confirm or deny admit that there was a K500 000 drawn to pay a local association, the Kwamje Sakapana Development Association. The association has distributed the funds to Menyamya District schools, aid posts, feeder roads and small community groups. The Office of the Department of National Planning had drawn this cheque to that association.

I want to know which programme did that amount come from and how did they procure these funds to be implemented through that association despite having the well- established District Procurement Commission in the district.

How did that association procure those funds?

The funds distributed are as follows; K250 000 to five primary schools in the Kome LLG, K100 000 to Menyamya Station ICA Primary School, K10 000 to Lagei road maintenance, K10 000 to Wailala road maintenance, K5 500 to Lagei Aid Post, K6 000 to Wailala Aid Post, K6 000 to Gumela Aid Post, K5 500 to Korongiri Aid Post, K10 000 to Papalima Aid Post, K20 000 to 20 elementary schools, K50 000 to the Kwanje Sakapana Development Association, K6 000 to one of the aid posts in the district and K21 000 to other community projects.

Mr Speaker, my question is, why did we not use the system already in place instead of putting these funds through different directions.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr RAINBO PAITA – Before I answer this question, I want to, on behalf of my district and my family, and as a resident of Moresby North-West, congratulate the new Member for Moresby North-West. And also, on behalf of the people of Hohola 1, Hohola 2, Hohola 3, Hohola 4 and Hohola 5, congratulate the Member.

Mr Speaker, in order to give the specifics of the funding, I have to consult the department and get back to the Member.

But, last year, under the special intervention programme, we assisted various associations, specifically road SMEs which were affected by Covid-19 and other associations listed under the SME programme.

As for his district, if he is talking about K500 000 anything beyond K500 000 cannot be paid from departments. Any amount below K500 000 to assist or small projects, it is within the threshold of every department to assist every association throughout the country not specifically his district.

But for the case of his district, I will check the specifics of the funding disbursement that he has raised and get back to him. I can confirm that throughout last year, during Covid-19 time, during my predecessor's time and my time as well, funding assistance was given through a special intervention fund. This is a programme held in my department and the SME programme that our government is promoting throughout the country.

04/04

I will get back to him in relation to his district but the government has been assisting other programs, associations and co-operative societies as part of its Covid-19 intervention. But I take note of the questions asked by the Member for Menyamyra and will respond to him in writing specifically on the breakups that he is referring to.

Western Province – Ok Tedi Shares

Mr TOBOI YOTO – Thank you, Mr Speaker, for recognising the people of Western Province. Before I ask my question to the Prime Minister, I also want to join with others in congratulating the new Member for Moresby North-West, Mr Lohia Boe Samuel for being elected to Parliament.

My question is:

Western Province hosts OK Tedi mine and for the last 38 years it generated income for our country. But to date back in the Province there is no major projects left behind as a legacy. I thank the previous government under the leadership of Honourable Peter O’Neill for making the decision to distribute 33 percent of the shares. And out of that, Fly River Provincial Government was given 12 percent since 2019. The dividend distributed is not enough for me to organise my people get prepared for the mine to be closed in 2025. The National Government must not forget the fact that the Mine’s closure is inevitable. Under the agreement, the mine will operate till 2025. I feel that my people back are not prepared for the closure of the mine.

(1) Can the National Government give the remaining 66 percent share equity that you are keeping back to the people of Western Province so that for the next four years I will organise my people for the closure of the mine?

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Speaker, I thank the Governor of Western Province for his question. It stated in the Bible that ask and you shall receive. And if avenues are available, then we can also give back to you. This applies to all the provinces.

When gold and copper were extracted from the ground in OK Tedi since 1985, no permanent legacy was left from this mine’

05/04

I believe it is a fair call so when I became the Prime Minister, we immediately actioned it. With regard to the Western Provincial Government and the landowners, we hold 33 percent. The National Government will still pick -up some big projects for the Western Province in Ok Tedi and will never be left behind. In conjunction with the Australian Government, we are working together to build a bigger and better hospital for our people there.

I would also like to tell the Governor that with regard to the National Government's 66 per cent; the Minister for Planning is now increasing two per cent of the tax credit. A big proportion of this money is going to be thrown back to sealing roads from Kiunga to Tabubil. You are also aware that when we took office; we ran a road from Tabubil to Olsobip. It has now passed Hindenbekwol and almost reached West Sepik linking the Telefomin District. I ask you and the Member for North Fly to work together in seeing these projects through.

We know that under 'Connect PNG', from South Fly to Weam is a road that is of much consideration. We have not given it substantial funding but you are not the exception here it is the same all across the country. In the next Parliament Bill will be tabled in Parliament for us to consider about our roads becoming part of our funding for the next 10 years. I am also aware that you do not have a permanent legacy included therefore, I must not lie to you that that 66 per cent will be given to you not just some of it. We have already gotten 33 per cent and from the 66 per cent we can select one or two major projects and fund it for the province thereby having a permanent legacy established.

I thank you for this question and please convey our thankyou and appreciation to the rest of the Western Province. We hope that our 'Connect PNG' law, tax credit projects and close up national government projects under the 66 per cent can fill in the cry that Western Province has been overlooked for so many years. Thank you.

DSIP-Delayed Funding

Mr JAMES DONALD – I direct my question to the Prime Minister but before I do, I would like to congratulate the newly elected Member for Moresby North-West.

I wish to correct a record that the Prime Minister made about two days ago with regard to the K2 million for the hospital in our districts.

Mr Speaker, I wish to correct here that in my district, K1 million has been allocated to agriculture projects as per the financial instructions. K500,000 for SMEs and the other K500,000 for the WASH Programs. I state this to clarify where I stand. The whole K2 million did not go to fixing up district hospitals. I am placing all this on record because it was his Government that sent all of us this financial instruction.

Mr John Simon – Point of Order! Mr Speaker, the Member for North Fly is misleading the Parliament. The Prime Minister specifically said that the K2 million was for Covid-19 Fund. It was not meant for district hospitals.

06/04

Mr JAMES DONALD - Mr Speaker, I think he did not attend the Parliament sitting during that time. If you check the Hansard record, it states that K2million was for the hospital.

My question is regarding DSIP and PSIP. To date, we have all received K2 million while according to the members on the government side received K5 million confirmed warrant copy. We are in the eight month and we are yet to receive the DSIP funds.

(1) Can the Prime Minister confirm or deny if there is a cash flow problem in the country? Because if you can't pay DSIP up until this month then it is serious. You are not following your budgetary appropriation for everyone.

(2) If it is not an issue of cashflow, can the Prime Minister confirm to the House that it is politicking?

Thank you.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank my brother member for North Fly for asking this important question.

He mentioned the K2 million allocated for the hospital and he also mentioned the K2 million funding for Covid – 19. I thank him for that clarification. Last year, in the DSIP allocation, there was K2 million funding for the hospital and you are now clarifying that the additional K2 million was for the Covid-19.

Mr SPEAKER – There are two points of order so, let me entertain one first. Let me first entertain the point of order from the Opposition Leader.

Mr Belden Namah – Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister seems to be misleading Parliament. I have here with me instruction number seven of 2020 from Finance dated 25 of August, 2020. It states very clearly under number five instruction for the districts and provincial allocations.

Each district will receive a total of K2 million comprising of K500 000 for the WASH program, K500 000 for MSME support program and K1 million for agriculture sector. I don't know where Prime Minister borrowed that K2 million for the health sector.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave of the Chair to tender this finance instruction.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Opposition Leader, your point of order is out of order.

Opposition Leader interjecting!

Mr SPEAKER – Hang on Opposition Leader! I heard the Prime Minister thanking the Member for North Fly for clarifying that the funds were issued as allocated while you have the financial instruction showing that breakdown.

So, the point of order is out of order because the Prime Minister is answering that question.

Mr James Donald – I want to put the record straight through you, Mr Speaker. Can everyone in this House go to you finance office to confirm and find out all the financial instructions. There is no other K2 million under DSIP for the Covid-19 program; that is a total lie. So, to confirm, I have received only K2 million that I have explained and tell the Prime Minister to go and check his records.

Thank you.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Member for North Fly, I think your point of order is also out of order. I am allowing the Prime Minister to continue answering the question.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Speaker, I am happy that the Opposition Leader and Member for North Fly are both saying that I am lying. But for the last three years, they said the former Prime Minister was also lying but now they are seated together on the other side.

07/04

Mr Speaker, if these two members can be patient and allow me to fully answer the question, then, they will understand. Last year, when the DSIP Funds were allocated, they never thanked the government but when they want the funds they just continue to ask. We must all be happy that we are a very responsible government. Within the DSIP allocation of K10 million, K2 million is allocated for health sector for all the districts. So, I want to ask the Member for Vanimo Green, what has he done for the hospital in Vanimo and why is he still asking?

BELDEN NAMAHA – Point of Order! Vanimo Green River District never received funding for the hospital. That is a totally blatant lie on the Floor of Parliament. So don't take your stand on the pulpit and preach.

Mr SPEAKER – The Chair is not going to make a ruling on this point of order, because I did not entertain it. Mr Prime Minister, continue to answer the question.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Speaker, whether I stand at the pulpit or play golf, it's the same as you going and drinking wine; that is your choice. You have no right to tell me what to do with my leisure time.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Prime Minister, before you continue to answer the question from the Member of North Fly, I would like to ask all the members to respect the member who is speaking.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Speaker, I will go straight to the point. Of every DSIP that is given out 20 per cent is allocated for the health sector, so 20 per cent of K10 million is K2 million which is allocated to the health sector; whether you invest in the district or elsewhere, K2 million is allocated for the health sector.

I would like to thank the Member for North Fly, for making it clear that he received the K2 million under the DSIP and another K2 million was given to assist with Covid-19 of which K1 million is to assist the agriculture businesses.

Mr James Donald – Point of Order! Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to make it clear that there is no other K2 million. The K2 million that I was referring to is within that K10 million allocated in the DSIP. So logically, if we receive the DSIP K10 million in full than we can say yes, we received the K2 million allocated for the health sector.

Mr Prime Minister, you should go and check the *Financial Instructions*; stop sitting here idol and telling all the lies.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Speaker, I apologise for taking so much of your time. The 20 per cent of the DSIP in its entirety is for the health sector.

When it come to the Covid-19 pandemic, the onus is on the districts and provinces which are the easiest conduits for local based interventions.

08/04

As for the other K2 million, K500 thousand is for WASH. These include projects in health centres and district hospitals. The other K1 million is for Agriculture intervention and the other K500 000 is for SME interventions. So, all these assistance have already been allocated to the districts and provinces to deliver services.

Mr Sam Akoitai – Point of Order! With due respect to the Prime Minister, it is true that within the DSIP there is the health component funding. We have to get this right.

As per the budget last year, some of the leaders here, did not get the full component of DSIP funding of K10 million, to be able to use K2 million for health services.

(Members interjecting!)

Mr Sam Akoitai – My district recieved only K7 million . So, how can I utilise K2 million for health services out of the K7 million? As a leader, I am making myself clear so I dont get implicated in that situation. I am clarifying my position so that I am not included with all those districts who recieve full funding as stated by the Prime Minister earlier.

MR JAMES MARAPE – That now leads me to answering the substantial question that the Member for North Fly asked.

On how we are tracking as far as this year's disbursement on DSIP and PSIP; and on what happend last year and the year before; and whether we have sufficient funds to satisfy our obligations as per the budget.

I would like the country to bear with me. Even though we got affected by Covid-19 in the last two years, we managed to the best of our ability to maintain the budget that was allocated. We spent about 95 to 96 per cent high in our budget commitments in 2020 and 2019.

Going back to Central Bougainville Member's point of order and to set the record straight, I give you assurance that I will get the Finance Minister to get a statement listing on how much DSIP was allocated to each province and district under my leadership in 2019 and 2020.

Just to point out as an example, for Vanimo-Green, I will understand if the Opposition Leader does not agree with me. In 2019, his district, Vanimo-Green received an allocation of K8 million in DSIP funding. Logically, with the K8 million allocation, 20 percent can be used for health services. However, if you feel a need to spend half due to Covid and other health issues, you as the leader, have the right to use your discretion.

In 2020, as per the record, Vanimo-Green then received an allocation of K5.5 million. So, the people of Vanimo-Green, please be aware that your member did not receive an allocation of K10 million DSIP funds but K5.5 million.

In 2021, as per the records, Vanimo Green only received K2 million DSIP funds. When the cash flow improves, we will try to honor our commitments to the best of our ability. I am clarifying this so that the good Opposition Leader is aware. I cannot go around spreading lies.

To the Opposition members, please bear with me, when the cash flow is sufficient, you will be getting what is committed to your district where we can all afford it together.

09/04

The former Prime Minister is aware of that style so I want to set the record straight. Members can allocate a portion of funds under their District Support Improvement Programme (DSIP) to the health sector, if health is a priority need in the district. Last year, as part of the Covid -19 intervention, I believe we distributed K2 million evenly throughout the districts in the country under WASH, SME intervention and agriculture. I want to make that clarification but the Treasurer will be making a statement on that later today and next week, on how we are responding to the covid-19 pandemic and how our economy is trekking. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Illegal Logging in Collingwood

Mr GARY JUFFA – My question is directed to the Minister for Environment, Conservation and Climate Minister on a matter that is happening in my province, and I would like the Ministers for Forest, Police, Lands and Agriculture to take note as it is relevant to their respective ministerial portfolios. I will give some background to it.

Firstly, I 'd like to commend the Minister for Environment for his active involvement in highlighting climate change and global warming issues, which is affecting, not only Papua New Guinea, but many countries in the world and especially when it is in geological terms, the Anthropocene world- the time when human s affect the world.

My concern is in regard to an ongoing illegal timber operation in Collingwood, in the Northern Province. This is the third time, we have had to intervene because of illegal timber operations in the area. The timber operations there is based on a fraudulent submission which the company processed through the departments I just named. We've prepared a report on that and I wish to seek leave of the Chair to table it in Parliament.

Tabling of Documents

The following document was laid on the table by leave of the Chair –

-Report on illegal Logging at Wanigela Collingwood Bay Northern Province by Northern Forest Products Limited

Mr GARY JUFFA – This report contains statements on affidavits from various witnesses including the Administrator, detailing a forged and fraudulent document, that being the minutes of the Provincial Forest Management Committee and they also contain the statements of other committee members. These forged documents were used to procure a permit from the PNG Forest Authority. As a result of that, the Provincial Forest Manager was arrested and there is an ongoing criminal investigation. I have written this report and presented it to this very relevant organisations at the end of May or beginning of June.

I want to commend the Minister for CEPA. His Department was the only department that responded. And on the 30th of June, the Managing Director signed a temporary suspension notice of the operations of that timber company. That suspension notice was issued to the company and it has completely ignored the notice and continued its operations.

We must ask ourselves now. How can it be that companies from other countries can come here and blatantly ignore our laws and do as they please? And why is it that these departmental heads and their ministers are not acting to protect and promote the interest of our people, whether they be in Collingwood or anywhere else in the country for that matter.

My Questions to the Minister for Environment are these.

(1) Are you aware that the company that was issued the suspension notice is still working and as we speak, is still loading logs onto a ship in total defiance of your notice?

(2) Will your Department take action and if so, what action will it take?

(3) Will you consider terminating the permit, given that the company procured the permit and licences fraudulently?

(4) Will your department conduct an inspection to verify the serious allegations of pollution in that logging area?

10/04

Mr WERA MORI – Mr Speaker, I thank the Governor of Oro for his series of questions.

Mr Speaker, before I respond, I wish to take the cue from other members in congratulating the new Member for Moresby NorthWest. I also convey the same compliments on behalf of the people of June Valley where I reside.

Mr Speaker, as the minister responsible for one per cent of the global landmass that hosts seven per cent of global diversity, I will come down hard on those who would like to operate like cowboys in this country and knowingly - at the expense of our people - destroy our environment.

I am aware of the matter the governor has alluded to and it is of great concern that we can allow companies to operate under very dubious circumstances - if what has been alleged is true.

When this was brought to my attention, I directed the managing director to investigate this matter and if the allegations are found to be true then we must do what is necessary and suspend the license, as expected by our people. We will terminate the license if necessary.

Mr Speaker, I can only answer part of the question because the Minister for Forests is not here to help me clear the matter as it is in his area of responsibility that permits are granted. I would basically say that at the outset that I am aware of the issue and that is the initiative I have taken.

In relation to the second question on whether the department will conduct an investigation, yes, I will send officers from the department to go and investigate and establish the level of pollution and if need be, the permit or licence will be terminated. But now that the permit was suspended, we will leave no stone unturned and this will be a lesson to those in the extractive industries.

If they cannot comply with the laws of this country, I will impose the maximum penalty of suspending their environmental permit which subsequently will lead to the termination of the permit. But because it is an activity in forestry, I am sure that my colleague, the Minister for Forest, will be advised forthwith as to what can be done on his part because of the fact that the foreign logging licence was issued by the PNG Forest Authority.

In the meantime, I thank the Honourable Governor for raising the issue because it is about time. Our interest as leaders in this Parliament is to serve the people we represent. In here, we represent people of this country who are first-class citizens that cannot defend themselves so they expect us to speak up on their behalf, therefore, I will not leave any stone unturned.

11/04

I assure this Parliament that I will do what is necessary to ensure, that permit which we have granted will be withdrawn and the onus will be upon my colleague Minister for Forest to do what he needs to do.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

MOTION BY LEAVE

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschhafen – Minister for National Planning and Monitoring)

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

Objections being raised, leave not granted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) put –

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent the Minister for Treasury from presenting his ministerial statement.

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

AYES – 65

NOES – 15

Motion so agreed to.

12/04

**THE MARAPE GOVERNMENT'S COVID-19 ECONOMIC RESPONSE PACKAGE
ON EXPENDITURE – MINISTERIAL STATEMENT –
MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF PAPER**

Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY (Kavieng – Minister for Treasury).– Mr Speaker, on 2 April, 2020, the Marape-led government outlined an innovative inclusive economic response to support the country's war on the Covid-19 pandemic. And further refinements were outlined on the 3 June, lifting the planned size from K5.6 billion to K5.7 billion.

13/04

Today I will provide some detail on the progress to date, and the way forward.

Context for the K5.7 billion Economic Response

I want to stress three important factors in the way we went about protecting people, protecting the budget and protecting the economy.

Firstly, was the importance of responsible budgeting. As I stated clearly back on 2 April last year, our direct budget response had to be prudent and responsible because of the economic wreckage caused by the corruption, waste and economic mismanagement of the preceding 10 years.

Secondly the package had to be innovative and timely prior experience - the Spanish Flu, the Ebola virus, the SARS epidemic - told us, that speed is of the essence when dealing with the health and economic risks of such an onslaught.

Our response was one of the first in the region. It was produced in extremely uncertain times, world growth had been downgraded to its lowest level since the great depression, a century ago. The world economy dropped by K38 trillion (or 38,000 billion)-that's 420 PNG economies wiped out, Dow Jones, the US share market index, dropped by 25 per cent in two months, losing seven trillion kina and dragging down the rest of the world with it. At one stage, oil prices went negative

So our response had to be flexible enough as the nature of the pandemic evolved, and as we learnt more.

Thirdly, the Opposition has been spreading misinformation about the response. Specifically, they pretend that all of the K5.7 billion was for direct Covid-19 expenditure. They

ignore the very clear announcements that, the direct expenditure part of the response was less than 10 percent of the total announced.

Mr Speaker, 10 percent of K5.7 billion means that the plan was always to have a direct-action plan of up to K570 million.

To detail how these direct-action funds were spent, I have attached to this statement a record of expenditure, including suppliers from the Department of Finance so far.

Protecting the Budget

The two largest parts of our response were designed to protect the Budget, in the face of much lower export receipts owing to declining oil prices, a big fall in PNG's national income from the 2020 Budget figure of K92.2 billion down to K81.6 billion, and a sharp drop in revenue ultimately estimated at 10.7 billion.

14/04

The Marape Government's first response was the Covid-19 bond issue of K2.5 billion to stop the bleeding in the 2020 Budget financing.

The second was to seek a blood transfusion of K1.5 billion in concessional loans.

Mr Speaker, every toea of the K2.5 billion Covid-19 bond placements were taken up. We had stopped the bleeding and I was pleased that we did this in a way that also supported our local finance and superannuation industries. Our people benefitted from the interest rates being paid on this financing, not some commercial "wantoks" of the former regime charging exorbitant fees on deals, such as the notorious UBS loan.

The second part; replacing the predicted loss of tax revenue was more challenging because it would have been wrong simply to increase taxes. So, we sought to secure cheap concessional finance from our reliable international friends.

Mr Speaker, the initial target was raising an additional K1.5 billion ultimately because of our prudent and responsible economic policies and the international respect that they engendered, we raised K2.8 billion, much of it, at an interest cost of zero per cent.

Mr Speaker, this was the vital blood transfusion that our economy I required. A loss of revenues of K2.7 billion now would not lead to budget cuts of K2.7 billion which the Marape Government avoided. Altogether, K5.3 billion to protect our 2020 Budget and fight the worst impacts of the pandemic. Where did this K5.3 billion go? It went to support all the programs that were part of the 2020 Budget. So, rather than facing massive expenditure cuts due to falls in tax revenues and domestic financing, the Budget was protected.

If we had not stopped the bleeding, there would have been massive cuts in expenditure. Cuts to our K185m fortnightly wages to the public service resulting in laying off doctors and nurses who were already overwhelmed with Covid-19 patients. Hospitals would have closed and more patients would have died. By laying off teachers, our schools throughout the country would have been shut down longer and students sent home for much longer than they were. By laying off policemen, frustration and anger from our earlier lockdowns would not have been so effectively contained, resulting in a far higher Covid-19 infection rate. That would have in turn resulted in a higher rate than the 18,000 cases today and a death rate far higher than 192 today.

If we had not stopped the bleeding, there would have been massive cuts in expenditure that support our businesses, cuts to infrastructure projects like the Tabubil to Telefomin Highway connecting to Western and West Sepik provinces, Bogia to Awar Highway in Madang Province, the Highlands Highway, Mendi-Tari road, Epo to Kerema Highway in Gulf Province and Finschhafen to Lae Highway in Morobe Province.

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- There would have been massive job losses, huge cuts to consumption on materials, fuel, machinery and ultimately tax revenue for the government, if we didn't protect spending planned for the 2020 Budget!

It is regrettable that some businesses are complaining that they did not receive direct funding assistance. But with all due respect, let's not forget, that the largest part of the Marape Government's response, meant that so many of their sales and contracts could continue, because the blood transfusion meant we didn't need to slash the Budget.

Mr Speaker, protecting the Budget means we did not slash K5.2 billion from our expenditure. Ignoring any multiplier effects, this could have slashed the same amount from our K81.6 billion economy and driven a further decline in real economic growth of 6.4 per cent. This would have destroyed jobs. It would have destroyed incomes. This is why over 90 per cent of the economic response went into protecting the budget. Because doing so meant, protecting the economy and protecting our people.

KO.5 billion in Direct Action Budget allocations-targeting the war on Covid-19

Mr Speaker, I want to turn to our Direct-Action funding; new spending programs aimed specifically at the war on Covid-19.

This is the specific new spending component of the Marape Government's Economic Response. As I said from the very beginning, this part was to form only 10 per cent of the response, and was based on extensive consultations with business, international organisations and Members of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, in the end we spent K501 million through Direct Action funding.

The attached Department of Finance report includes information on which agencies received the funding, including warrant amounts and actual spending recipients, as well as major suppliers.

The Marape Government is committed to accountability and transparency. This report provides the details of our expenditure, rather than hiding the ugly truth as the former Prime Minister did.

Mr Speaker, the largest component of the K500.1 million expenditure was the direct transfers to the provincial and district Covid-19 Trust Accounts established under the *Special Finance Instructions No.5 & 8 in 2020*. These totalled K214.8 million, just over half the Covid-19 Direct Action funding.

The K214.8 million consisted of:

- K1 million to every province and district to support local agriculture to ensure food security and maintain nutrition levels. This program featured an outreach campaign and support for the purchase of seeds and other inputs, and management of threats to crops and animal health;
- K500 000 to every province and district to support local WASH programs to help prevent the spread of coronavirus into communities where poor sanitation facilities and water supplies made people vulnerable;

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- K500,000 per District for MSMEs to help keep small PNG businesses and entrepreneurs operating at a time of heavy restrictions, falling commodity prices, and other problems created by the Covid -19 crisis. These funds also helped keep some much-needed cash circulating in our villages and rural communities.

Let me set out examples of how Kavieng District spent these funds:

- K400,000 supplied as farming kits of tools and equipment such as sickles, farm boots and fertilizer to oil palm growers.

- K350,000 for store supplies provided to SMEs to kick start and support rural villagers table markets, house markets and trade stores, as well as K230,000 for the purchase of two trucks to distribute these materials.

- K170,000 to our Niu Ailan Savings and Loans Society to provide micro-finance to local businesses, especially women.

- K33,000 grant to copra farmers to assist with the purchase of coconut press machines and seedlings.

- K15,000 to cocoa farmers for the establishment of nurseries, seedlings and cocoa fermantries.

- The Kavieng District Development Authority has produced acquittals accounting for the expenditure of K1.6 billion of these funds with the remainder from the initial allocation still to be spent, so I encourage my leaders and members to complete acquittals on the Covid -19 expenditure as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker, let me highlight majors' examples of some other direct actions on Covid-19 expenditure set out in the attached of finance department report.

- K19 Million for personal protective equipment,

- K16.4 million for isolation ward set up costs,

- K30.7 million to provincial health authorities,

- K71.8 million to the police to cover additional costs associated with Covid-19 complaints.

- K5.8 million to the Department of Defence to help strengthen our borders,

- K2 million for Customs,

- K2 million for NAQIA also to help strengthened our borders,

- K11.1 million to cover the costs of bringing stranded PNG citizens home,

- K3 million to the Port Moresby General Hospital, and;

- K3 million for the National Operation Centre to help coordinate the national coronavirus response.

Mr Speaker, I have emphasised the budget elements in this Statement, but there were other innovative parts of the overall response that played a key role.

At the start of the crisis early last year, the business sector was facing growing cash flow problems.

We therefore worked with the Bank of Papua New Guinea to get the finance sector to keep or increase cash circulating in the economy. One element was to offer loan repayment holidays, the outcome of which, as reported by the central bank, was more than K1.7 billion in loans benefitting from a repayment holiday.

I know this holiday was only temporary, and businesses are now having to repay their loans, but it did give them time to adapt to the crisis.

Similarly, the Internal Revenue Commission also delayed tax payment times, which also helped keep more cash in the system at that critical time.

The Government also worked with the superannuation industry to help workers get earlier access to their entitlements if they were laid off work. The required changes in legislation were passed in November last year.

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Mr Speaker, the way forward, we continue to live in extraordinarily uncertain times. As I look around the world today, I do not want to become complacent, somehow thinking that we in Papua New Guinea are so tough that Covid-19 cannot hurt us.

The new Delta Strain of Covid-19 is re-writing the rule book yet again. Countries that had earlier done extremely well are now facing major outbreaks in Indonesia with an extra 50,000 deaths in the last two months, in Japan forming a scary backdrop to the Olympic Games, Fiji under siege and millions now in lockdown in Australia.

The worst may be yet to come for PNG. I hope that it won't, but as Treasurer, I do need to prepare for the worst.

Six hundred million has been set aside this year as part of an emergency response, a further K60 million has been set aside for 2022. We are ready and willing to respond as needed.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I have outlined where the K5.7 billion Covid-19 response packages went; protecting people, protecting the Budget, protecting the economy, protecting education and health spending, protecting wages and wage spending, protecting payments to Members for their local districts, protecting business through on-going contracts and repaying arrears. This was not about some additional new spending; this was about stopping K5.3 billion in budget cuts. That is, K5.3 billion protecting the 2020 Budget and four hundred million in new direct-action programs to help and protect people and businesses and keep the economy ticking over, K5.7 billion in total.

The Marape Government has saved Papua New Guinea from the worst of the catastrophes, that have engulfed other nations leading to more than 4 million deaths, hundreds

of millions of infections, many with crippling long-term effects, and untold socio-economic pain and suffering.

Mr Speaker, before concluding, I want to thank all of our front-line workers; doctors, nurses, health workers, security forces and all of those whom I have not mentioned, who have committed to keeping our country, communities and citizens safe and functioning. I also thank friendly nations and multi-lateral partners for their generosity. I thank our citizens as they have had to deal with the many restrictions on travel, work and other aspects of their lives.

Our hearts go out to those Papua New Guineans who have caught this terrible infection, those who have lost loved ones, and the families of the more than four million people worldwide who have died, as a result of this terrible pandemic.

Mr Speaker, I am proud to be a part of the Marape Government team, that has led PNG into battle and has, so far, conquered our enemy. We will continue to fight both wars with the Covid-19 enemy; the health war and the economic war.

We will continue to act responsibly, caring for the people of Papua New Guinea, looking to our future.

Thank you.

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

That the Parliament take note of the paper.

Debate adjourned.

18/04

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed –

That grievances be noted.

Mr DON POLYE(Kandep) – Thank you, Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to raise some points on the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission and its conduct in running elections in Papua New Guinea from my experience and through observations.

I also want to do a very brief comparison of the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) election system and the LPV system which we have been using these past years.

Mr Speaker, first of all, I am speaking from my recent experience in the way which I came into this Floor of Parliament and being the MP for the last three months; through an election petition that I have filed through the court of disputed returns. That has got me through the recount of the votes for Kandep Open Electorate of the 2017 elections.

Mr Speaker, you will also be aware when you came into Parliament in 2007 and I think the honourable Prime Minister also came in at that time, but some of us were already here in 2002. Some of those Members are people like the leader of the URP Party, Honourable William Duma, former Prime Minister and Member for Ialibu-Pangia, Honourable Peter O'Neill, Sir Puka Temu and few of us who have been here since 2002. I do not know if the Leader of Opposition was also elected in 2002 but he came after that. I think Dr Allan Marat was also here in 2002.

So, there is a group of elected MPs here on the Floor of Parliament who were part of this changes from the First-Past-The-Post system to the LPV System. So, when I discuss on these issues, they will probably share with me some of the issues that I will be raising from their own perspective.

Let me talk about the Electoral Commission since we have limited time and I will be brief. The Electoral Commission really; I am not criticizing but I would like the Parliament to address these issues that are affecting the nation in terms of election, the conduct and the stewardship that the Commissioner has over the elections of this country.

I would like to say without any shadow of doubt, that there is a serious level of incompetency in the electoral level. The Electoral Commission; I say there is a level of incompetency there in the Electoral Commission that goes down to the provinces and their electorates and LLGs.

I will briefly talk about the Kandep election in 2017, it might be a localised issue but I have seen it experienced universally, throughout the country during elections.

In the Kandep elections recently, looking at the incompetency of the electoral commission; we went to elections and I was the leader of the Oppositions at that time. And being the Leader of the Opposition, it appeared to me that the Electoral Commission was targeting me to be removed from my seat. The conduct and the actions of the electoral commission was completely belligerent and militant against me. They were not doing their job as an independent body to run the elections.

I will tell you what had happened. When we went into elections, I realised that the returning officer that was supposed to be appointed by the Provincial Election Committee was refused or not appointed. But somebody completely new from somewhere else the electoral commission; was appointed. We turned up to do the elections and when the writs were issued leading up to the elections this particular person was appointed as the returning officer for Kandep.

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The Provincial Election committee chairperson and the election manager and people at the electoral office had a different nominee, while the one appointed was a completely different person.

Our complaints fell on deaf ears; and this person continued to use his discretion as the returning officer to appoint his own polling officials who were known supporters of one candidate. These foul plays did not stop there but continued to the Counting Room and decided that boxes from this particular polling booth should not be counted

That is why when we went to court; and upon the Court's decision; these boxes were counted and that is how I retained my seat.

What I want to bring across is that the system could be correct but the people appointed to positions compromise their positions to politics and are the ones who spoil the system. If such people do exist how fair will the coming elections be? We must look into election related foul play, from the top right down to the people on the ground, during polling. We can not go into elections with such still remaining.

Mr Speaker, the Government needs to do some changes because if there are more Disputed Returns, then we know there is something really wrong, we need to take stock and replace people. Some of these people have been in that office for too long. And they seem to own the system and can rig the election whenever they like. The Kandep case should be a good example of a rigged election and three Supreme Courts and Seven National Courts have made the same decision that it was rigged therefore, a recount was done.

I was duly elected in the recount; I have experienced that there are people in the system that are compromising the elections.

The other area is the voting system; the LPV system, when we first introduced it in 2003, after the 2002 elections, we were told that it would be a good system that will minimize most of the problems associated with First- Past- The-Post system. But this has not happened and we should refer back to the old First- Past- the- Post system.

Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the Parliament to take note because; this is what I have experienced. I the sitting MP, goes back to Kandep as Opposition Leader and what happens? There are many candidates that have already collaborated and rallied against me. So, I cannot get the second and third votes, they already tampered with the boxes and did their own second and third vote counting. I never got any of the second and third choices that I know I was given.

The LPV system is not really good for a sitting MP, you will have many candidates going against you and the second and third votes will be controlled so much that you will just end up losing, even if you do score in the primary votes. LPV system can be abused even through the electronic system because people are manually feeding the information in. No matter how authentic you make it look with serial numbers or whatever, someone will at the end of the line, be the person responsible for entering those numbers into the computers and if they are corrupt, we are going to continue this election rigging, year in, year out.

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Even during counting time, you will think that you will win but instead you lost simply because the electoral system has been manipulated.

To conclude what I am sharing is from experience and the Parliament should reconsider because we thought that a lot of violence and malpractices in the first-past-the-post system occurred before 2002. At that time six electorates failed. So, we changed to limited preferential voting but that didn't solve the problem.

For instance, in Kandep two policemen were killed and so LPV system didn't solved the problem but more problems occurred. More costs were involved, polling and counting takes more time and during court of disputed returns on election petitions so many witnesses from first, second and third vote and it's in total mess. The concept is good for democracy but the practicality of it in PNG is not serving the interest of democracy.

Therefore, I strongly recommend to this House that we change back to the first-past-the-post and not LPV system.

I also recommend that the Electoral Commission be reformed and the stewards there be looked at and more competent people be appointed, thank you.

Mr BENNY ALLAN (Unggai-Bena) – Thankyou Mr Speaker, I wish to join with others leaders in welcoming the newly elected Member for Moresby North-West, on behalf of my

people in Unggai-Bena and also people from where I reside, End of the World, it's located towards Taurama Barracks.

Mr Speaker, I also want to thank the Prime Minister on behalf of the people of Eastern Highlands and Unggai-Bena for visiting Eastern Highlands, in particular, to Kainantu District and Henganofi and announcing some projects and allocating funds to upgrade district roads totalling K4 million for each district, all the districts received theirs but Unggai-Bena only received half of it and is still waiting for K2 million.

Mr Speaker, on that note I also want to raise some serious issues in relation to health services in the province and I am glad that the Minister concerned is also listening in the Chamber.

The current CEO's term has lapsed. He served for three terms and it's a long time and all the Members from Eastern Highlands would agree with me that status of the Provincial Hospital has dropped badly because of the leadership of the current CEO and PHA.

With this result all the specialist doctors like surgeons and physicians have left Goroka General Hospital. It was once regarded as one of the referral hospitals but now the doctors refer patients to Hagen General Hospital, Kundiawa General Hospital which it's the best in the country.

Mr KERENGA KUA – Thank you!

Mr BENNY ALLAN – All the patients in Goroka Hospital are referred to Kundiawa Hospital because there are no specialists in Goroka because of the decisions made by the CEO and PHA. And even the health workers protested against some of the decisions and management of the hospital. I know that their term has expired and we don't know their current status. Therefore, it would be unfair and not in the best interest of Eastern Highlanders for them to be reinstated.

I want to put on record here that many patients have died because of shortage of drugs and they are protesting against the current PHA.

21/04

If the Health Department and the Minister for Health had listened to them, we wouldn't have this situation in Eastern Highlands. If the Board and CEO have been reinstated then something is wrong.

We still have serious problems on hand. Most of our medical staff will be resigning from the hospital. Some of the best physicians who have been serving in Eastern Highlands for many years unfortunately have left to join the private clinics. Others have gone to Kundiawa and elsewhere within our country and this is why we are facing serious problems in our country, especially in health services in the provinces. About eight land cruisers (10-seaters) were purchased and distributed to each district, however, the allocated vehicles are used as private vehicles by the Health PPO's and not delivering services respectively. What I hear now is that from funding allocated to all districts through the PHA, a deduction will be done for the cost of the eight vehicles purchased for each district.

There is no proper coordination and collaboration between the PHA and all districts, a total break-down.

Mr Minister, please take note of this issue seriously because if the current PHA and CEO are reinstated we are going to have a serious problem. The only solution now is to appoint a new Board and CEO to take office as per the doctors and staffs concern at the hospital, Goroka base especially. We, in Unggai-Bena, have tried to get a formal support letter from the CEO for the Health Minister to release funds for my district's health services, unfortunately, have not received it yet.

Beginning of this year, I was advised by the Minister as well to get a letter from the PHA and the CEO but still unsuccessful.

Mr Minister, please take note, I am speaking on behalf of the people of Eastern Highlands and I believe the other eight members also share the same sentiments with me in opposing the reinstatement of the current Board and CEO. Thank you.

Mr CHARLES ABEL (Alotau)– Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to be part of the grievance debate.

Grievance debate is about bringing our complaints or making complaints so I take this opportunity to make some complaints and of course I sympathise to some extent with people like our Treasurer that have sat on that side and being constantly bombarded with complaints, particularly on finance.

Mr Speaker, I want to make some debate regarding his statement on the Covid-19 and what I'll do is to convert it slightly and turn it into more of a complaint about some specifics relating to the Budget and of course Covid-19 funds.

Mr Speaker, I received some calls yesterday from the schools in my districts, and I note some of the response from the Education Minister in the newspaper yesterday. Cameron High

School, the eminent high school in Milne Bay and also Hagita High School, the important Catholic High School, and the other three high schools as well in my district did come and see me in my office last week.

22/04

I received a call from Cameron High School yesterday, complaining that they are unable to feed the boarding students in the school. In fact, they have begun to send students home and it is intercepting all the high schools in my district and I believe it is also affecting many other schools throughout the country. I am deeply concerned about this because obviously our children are losing access to education.

Mr Speaker, I am also receiving complaints from our councillors and magistrates about their outstanding payments. I have also heard from a church worker that they haven't been paid for almost three months now. I received some information that some funds are coming and I hope that is the case.

I would like to mention the SIP Funding which the Prime Minister mentioned today, in the response to the question of the Member for North Fly, that we in the Opposition have only received 20 per cent of our DSIP Funds which we are grateful for. But it is August and we are facing a lot of difficulties. Many a times we turn to use the DSIP Funds to cover up for the delays from the government because we are given no choice. So, the DSIP Fund is becoming like an emergency fund for issues we face in education, health, law and order, et cetera.

We are in August, and we have only received the second K1 million and I thank the Treasurer but obviously there is a budget of K10 million which we have already made commitments.

Mr Speaker, there are many other line items in the Budget that we know the government will be struggling with and obviously as we hear from the Treasurer, we are facing difficult times. Now, this is why the reports as the MYEFO are so important. It is a requirement under the *Fiscal Responsibility Act* that we report to this House and the country about the status of the financial situation and we respond to that on where we are financially in respect of funding the budget if we are experiencing this cuts that are happening.

Mr Speaker, we have run successive massive budget deficits, which means that we are borrowing even more. We have had the Final Budget Outcome Report from 2020, telling us that the budget deficit was K7.3 billion and we know that in 2019 it was K4.2 billion, and we have budgeted for 2021, K6.6 billion. This is a total of K18.1 billion in three years.

So, we can construct our budgets on these large amounts, plan to borrow and rely on our good international partners and we thank them because they have stepped in with an international effort to fund Covid-19; not just here in Papua New Guinea but the whole world.

Papua New Guinea has benefitted from that to help us fund this K7.5 billion, which includes K2 million to each district as has been said on this Floor and again we are grateful for that fund to alleviate SME's and WASH and so on at the district level.

23/04

But I want to remind the House that last year's DSIP Funds of K10 million was cut to K8 million and the K2 million was diverted for Covid-19. So we thank our development partners for helping us through this difficult time and we have to be careful that we don't take too much credit for that funding from our development and international partners because it was an international response to Covid-19 pandemic globally. It wasn't by some special and fantastic effort by Papua New Guinea to receive that funding. It was a global response so we are grateful for that global response and the question is how have we spent it and that is the subject of the report that was presented.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Member for Alotau, you are now debating the Ministerial statement. You have stated your point on the issues faced in the districts and the wards so we will set a time to debate that ministerial statement.

Mr CHARLES ABEL – Thank you, Mr Speaker. The point I am trying to make is, there is a concern about the ability to fund the 2021 Budget which is manifesting itself in some of these funding issues and affecting our people. And if the MYEFO report come, it is important that we talk about identifying those funding gaps which the 2020 final budget outcome repeats the 2021 Budget, there is a K2 billion funding financing gap there. We need to understand if that funding will be made available. We need to understand how the budget is going to be funded if we are having these funding issues as we speak. Are we going to have to go back to the Central Bank, what are the implications for the 2021 Budget and of course 2022 Budget going forward? And ultimately, what are the implications for our people on the ground? People like those at Cameron High School, Hagita High School and the rest of the public servants and councillors on the ground. It comes back to important documents like the National Budget and of course the reports that tell us how the Budget is progressing. I sympathize with the challenges before the Treasurer and the Government, having been there, but now I am on this

side and I have my grievances. I have these concerns at the district level. Otherwise, we are here to support and find solutions for our country. But I make those grievances on behalf of my people.

I look forward to the MYEFO and further debating the Covid-19 Report. But I think the Covid-19 Report must come within the context of a budget and an overall economic plan for the country and then given the statistics and details, we discuss the Covid-19 funding in the context of the overall budget. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr WERA MORI (Chuave – Minister for Environment, Conservation & Climate Change) – Thank you, Mr Speaker. Apart from being a minister, I also have grievances. It would not be me to not express them especially on behalf of the people that I represent.

Before I go onto that, I could like to speak on the subject of agriculture. I must commend the Minister for taking a proactive approach to support our primary industries. One of the points that I want to raise is apart from producing our food crops to meet our domestic needs, how can we be able to export. When I was the Commerce Minister in 2018, I addressed a conference in Brisbane, where I spoke of the need for us to improve our biosecurity protocols in place so that we can be able to export foods like taro, yam, banana and of course all the organic grown food crops we grow in this country.

Unfortunately, to date that has not been established and we are losing hundreds of millions of kinas that we could have.

24/04

Therefore one of the things that we must see as a necessity is simply to address our bio-security measures so that we can conform to the standards of Australia and New Zealand. This is to assure the people of Australia and New Zealand who will be buying food produce that meet the bio-security standards.

I am emphasising this because in all form of businesses, whether it be in the extractive industries or manufacturing industries, there has to be a security on the supply chain. You simply cannot export 200 tonnes of fresh food to Queensland and then when they expect another 200 tonnes the next month, you won't be able to meet that. This is not how modern commerce operates around the world.

Mr Speaker, I will touch more on Agriculture, we have been talking about low hanging fruits and I must commend the Prime Minister for us to bring our extractive industries to the

forefront. We have signed the deal on Pasca and soon we'll be moving onto Waffi-Golpu and of course there are other projects like the re-opening of Porgera. But, another thing that creates more employment for our people is the Primary Industries, we forgot about the plantation sectors. I know that when we had existing plantation sectors in Jiwaka and Eastern Highlands Province, it employed thousand of people including my people of Chimbu and also Chuave. They we were able to work in those plantations but unfortunately the plantation have naturally ceased operation.

In 2018, in my capacity as a former Minister for Commerce and Industry, I met members, officials and directors of the Rural Industry Council and they told me that some of the impediments that basically lead to the demise of the plantation were accesibility in terms of transport, whether it be sea, air or land transport; law and order; and, the security of tenure of the land that they had of plantations.

I am thankful thatin a supplementayr budget sometimes back in 2018 or 2019, K100 million was allocated in my capacity, as then Minister for Commerce. I basically decided that we should revive this sector. Let us take some pilot projects in certain provinces, revive plantations in the Waghi Valley in Jiwaka, revive plantations in the Asaro-Goro Valley of Eastern Highlands, revive plantations in the Kainantu Aiyura valley and of course look at other crops like coconuts in East and West New Britain, Madang, cocoa and in other parts of the country. Unfortunately, I am speaking now the Minister for Enivronment and Conservation but this must be done because I am thankful to the Government for the price support. But there is a big difference, price support cannot necesserily lead to the increase in productions of those primary produce. What we mean by that is, our productions may remain static except the prices will be higher and the people will get more, this is different from an increase in productions.

25/04

When you increase in productions paying at a higher rate, you will bring in more revenue or foreign exchange into this country.

So, this is one thing that I would like to basically highlight to us in government which we need to get this addressed. Especially, a province like Jiwaka. We have help them anchor onto some economic base. We need to improve or we have got to revive some of those plantations.

Mr Speaker, I speak here simply because the Mine Company; Eastern Pacific Mines, we have paid a penalty of surrendering 20 million shares of Highlands Pacific Limited when we mortgaged plantations in Jiwaka. This is on record.

Unfortunately, we lost out and the plantations died out. They need to be revived and the people of Jiwaka must have an economic base. I cannot speak for Chimbu because we do not have the land unless we open up Karimui-Nomane district.

Why I advocate for coconut plantation is because when you look at Oil Palm, they produce two types of products. The other one is the Canola oil, which has a nut that looks like a coconut. The canola oil purchases more at premium prices.

Therefore, we need to revive the coconut plantations in the country and piggy back on the market or supply chain that is established by the New Britain Palm Oil. This is not rocket science.

Mr Speaker, I have raised this issue of awarding contracts in the government's forum which needs to be addressed.

I would like to inform the nation that the Secretary for Works must stop his clandestine operations. He has made us look like fools. We have to address these issues to avoid this sort of practices and it is creating dis-unity in this country.

I am raising all these because I am one of leaders representing Chimbu, thank you, Mr Speaker.

Sir PUKA TEMU (Abau) – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will be brief and before I do that, on behalf of people of Abau, I would like to congratulate honourable Lohia Boe Samuel. This is your house and may the good Lord watch over you and give you strength.

I believe that the Port Moresby North-West seat should be specifically dedicated by law, only for our local people. When I saw 46 other candidates bidding for this by-election, I was really worried that the transformation of people and culture changed that. But, the wisdom of our voters in Port Moresby North-West, has brought to this House the rightful person who is the traditional owner of the land and I congratulate him.

I also believe that the Motu-Koita Assembly Chairman should be made a member of the National Parliament so that, we have a very good representation. Because the rest of the NCD seats is open for anyone to contest. But like the people of Abau, Alotau or everybody we represent, we have forgotten that under the *NCD Act*, the local people really should be represented.

Mr Speaker, I strongly recommend and seek the support of the Prime Minister that we should look at amending the legislation so, that the Chairman of Motu-Koita Assembly should be represented here on the Floor of Parliament.

I have just few observations to share in today's Grievance Debate. My first observation is that, we really have not made use of the five years very well in the Tenth Parliament. Through a Supreme Court decision, we have declared one sitting of Parliament an illegal sitting. We only sat for 23 days in this calendar year from August to August. The requirement is for 63 days.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable House has been doing some things illegally and I strongly recommend that, because this is a highly respected House, we really should be very prudent. We need to create the right culture.

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I know we adopted the Westminster system, which we are not familiar with. I know we are struggling to carve out the right culture to feed the Westminster system, but there are cultures known as the Conventions of the Westminster system, where we really have fallen short.

Mr Speaker, let me give an example under the three arms of government; the judiciary, legislature and the executive. For instance; the judiciary, when we bring a matter that we believe is of national importance, we respect the independence of the judiciary in terms of the timing, but sometimes we feel that they are not quick enough and the time lapses, therefore, the matter before the court becomes out of date. I refer to the 23 Sitting days; the matter was filed but we are in August now and the time has lapsed so we had to withdraw it. So, are we setting a precedence for the 11th Parliament so they can adjourn for six months? Do we want to promote this kind of culture and abrogate the *Constitution*? No! What kind of culture are we introducing to this House?

Mr Sam Basil – Point of Order! Mr Speaker, I wish to remind the Member for Abau that when I was in the Opposition, we questioned the Sitting days, and he was on this side but he never said anything about it.

(Members interjecting!)

Mr Sam Basil – Mr Speaker, it's very sad to see that he changes like an octopus when he sits on different rocks.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Member for Abau.

Sir PUKA TEMU – Mr Speaker, you have to rule his point of order as out of order before I can stand up.

This is a grievance debate, and Mr Deputy Prime Minister, as you can recall, in the first week of Sitting of Parliament, I stood up on the other side and I said – and this is recorded in *Hansard* – this is a chance for all you young leaders to create a better culture for this House.

Our young Prime Minister, Honourable James Marape, I too support you.

Mr James Marape – I have already turned 50.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Sir PUKA TEMU – Mr Speaker, we have been given the opportunity by our people to be seated in this Honourable House and to uphold our laws. One of the biggest challenges we have faced in this country is lawlessness because our citizens don't adhere to our laws. If this House does not uphold the laws, what will our citizens say? They will say, if you don't uphold the laws then we will do likewise. We should not be pointing fingers at each other here.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Member, whilst the debate is on upholding the laws, let me now follow *Standing Orders* and interrupt the debate since it is 1 o'clock.

Sir PUKA TEMU – Mr Speaker, I have two minutes remaining.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Member, your debate is about upholding the law, therefore, I am adhering to the *Standing Orders*. Let me quote Section 108 then I will allow you to conclude.

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Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Member, *Standing Order* 108(3) in relation to Grievance Debate states that if consideration of the question has not been concluded at 1 p.m. - and its already past 1 p.m. - the debate on it shall be interrupted and the Speaker shall put the question. For your case, you have one-minute left to conclude before we agree to put the question.

Sir PUKA TEMU – Thankyou, Mr Speaker, for agreeing with me. I am standing not as Sir Puka Temu but standing as the people of Abau.

I will conclude that when you make this ruling, you are ruling against the people of Abau whom I represent.

Mr Speaker, one issue is that those members got a bigger share of their DSIP while we didn't. Therefore, I am recommending that we change the DSIP to DSG and make it constitutional so that after the elections when people on the other side are here and we are there, we perform very well. Thankyou.

Motion – That the grievances be noted – agreed to.

Mr RAINBO PAITA – Mr Speaker, I thank all the members on both sides for sitting through the first week of Parliament meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the Parliament adjourned to Tuesday 17th August at 10 a.m

The Parliament adjourned at 1 p.m.