

EIGHTH DAY

Friday 20 August 2021

DRAFT HANSARD

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## PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

### CORRECTIONS TO DAILY DRAFT HANSARD

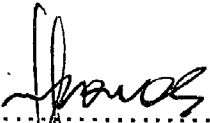
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.....  
**HARRY MOMOS**

Principal Parliamentary Reporter

## **EIGHTH DAY**

**Friday 20 August 2021**

The Deputy Speaker (**Mr Koni Iguan**) took the Chair at 10 a.m..

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

Sitting suspended.

The Deputy Speaker again resumed the Chair at 10.40 a.m., and invited the Minister for Public Service and the Member for Nuku, **Honourable Joe Sungi**, to say Prayers:

‘Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen!’

### **MOTION BY LEAVE**

**Mr WILLIAM SAMB** (Goilala – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) – I ask leave of Parliament to move a motion without notice.

Leave granted.

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

Motion (by **Mr William Samb**) agreed to –

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent Notice No. 254, Government Business, being called on forthwith.

# OIL AND GAS (PAPUA LNG PROJECT) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2021

## First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Kerenga Kua** and read a first time.

## Second Reading

Leave granted to move the Second Reading forthwith.

**Mr KERENGA KUA** (Sinasin-Yonggamugl – Minister for Petroleum) – I move –  
That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, I introduce into this Honourable House for approval of a bill called the Oil and Gas Papua LNG Project (Amendment) Bill 2021, which is a bill for an Act that is required to be approved by Parliament in line with the terms of the Papua LNG Project Gas Agreement

The Oil and Gas (Papua LNG Project) (Amendment) Bill 2021 clarifies the amendments to the *Oil and Gas Act 1998*, made by the *Oil and Gas (Amendment) Act 2020* (No 11 of 2020).

Mr Speaker, I refer to the amendments to the *Oil and Gas (Amendment) Act 1998* made by the *Oil and Gas (Amendment) Act 2020* (No.11 of 2020) as the 2020 Amendments.

Mr Speaker, the Oil and Gas Papua LNG Project (Amendment) Bill 2021 only concerns the Papua LNG Gas Agreement and any application for a petroleum development licence for the Papua LNG Project, and not any other gas agreement, project or petroleum development licence in Papua New Guinea. It confirms that in accordance with the spirit and letter of Clause 9.6(a) of the Papua LNG Project Gas Agreement. The changes brought about by the 2020 Amendments do not create any inconsistencies with the Papua LNG Gas Agreement.

**02/08**

Mr Speaker, the Papua LNG Project participants are currently progressing the technical work necessary, so that the two Papua LNG Project liquefaction trains may proceed within the PNG LNG project's site at Caution Bay.

Once this is complete and following the start of FEED, they will submit an application for a Petroleum Development Licence. In addition, given the significant capital intensity of the Papua LNG Project, which will be around US\$10 billion to US\$12 billion, it must be financed

using a combination of debt from lenders and equity from the project's sponsor or the joint venture partners.

Prompt passage of the proposed bill during this parliamentary session will demonstrate to sponsors, LNG buyers and financiers, the State's continued full commitment to the Papua LNG Project, contract sanctity and the fiscal regulatory regime contemplated by the Papua LNG Project Gas Agreement. This is why we are proposing this bill for approval today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to achieve its purpose, this Oil and Gas (Papua LNG Project) (Amendment) Bill 2021 is limited to:

(1) Reinstating the *Oil and Gas Act 1998* provisions affected by the 2020 Amendments to apply as if they had not been amended in relation to the Papua LNG Project Gas Agreement and any application for a petroleum development licence for the Papua LNG Project; and

(2) Renders the *Oil and Gas Act 1998* provisions affected or inserted by the 2020 Amendments inapplicable to the Papua LNG Project Gas Agreement and any application for a PDL for the Papua LNG Project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, as I have previously said, in any commercial agreement there has to be some give and some take. This bill gives comfort to Papua LNG Project sponsors and financiers so that the Papua LNG Project may progress towards FEED in line with the mutually agreed timetable announced in May 2021. This is pivotal to progressing a timely development of Elk and Antelope gas fields that delivers maximum benefits to recognized landowners, the project affected communities, the Independent State of Papua New Guinea and of course the project's developers and financiers.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

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

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

Bill read a second time.

### **Message from the Governor-General**

A Message from His Excellency, the Governor-General dated 18 August 2021, was announced recommending the imposition of taxation and expenditure of public money of Papua New Guinea insofar as the Bill relates to and provides for such imposition.

### Third Reading

Leave granted to move the Third Reading forthwith.

Motion (by **Mr Kerenga Kua**) proposed –

That the Bill be now read a third time.

**03/08**

**Mr CHARLES ABEL** (Alotau) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I rise to make a few comments on the legislation before us and essentially to lend my support to this small legislation. I also thank the Minister and the Government for bringing this legislation forward and progressing this very important project which has been late in coming. But better late than never, because quite frankly as we all know the country is crying for some economic stimulus and some light on the horizon in terms of projects, actions and plans to drive the economy.

We understand the Government's desire and intent and the actions taken to review the Papua LNG project, examine the Gas Agreement and the intention to get the best benefit for our people. I am glad that process has been conducted. At the end of the day, what we have been saying after all is that this is an excellent project. We are not going to get all the desires that we want immediately in the project, but it is a progressive exercise and I stand to confidently say that in the complex negotiations on the Papua LNG project, indeed it is a progress from the PNG LNG project which in itself was an excellent project as well. Naturally the returns weren't everything we wanted but it has delivered significant revenue to the country and the Papua LNG is also a further step in that direction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in actual fact, the proceeds from the Papua LNG project give to the State 51 per cent of the net proceeds in terms of the take to the State. It is US\$13 billion and is very much needed by this country. So, we thank the Petroleum Minister and the Government and we encourage the Government for its own continued commitment to our development partners. One of the things that we must reflect to the world, when we make commitments, when we have an existing fiscal regime, and when we sign documents, is that Papua New Guinea stands by those agreements. Once those agreements are signed, it is a bad reflection when we make subsequent amendments to the ground rules and the fiscal regime; it sends a completely wrong signal. The Government went forward in total confidence with international partners, we signed an excellent agreement that gave additional royalties, gave carried

financing, gave third-party access to the pipeline, and it included local content as well. These were lessons learnt from the PNG LNG project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to say, we look forward to the government adding to that progressive task, improving on the games for the state but at the same time being reasonable, allowing an economic return to genuine investors, and not changing rules.

One of the concerns that I raised regarding the amendments that we are exempting in this project from now is about what happened to the rights of landowners in terms of a development forum, in terms of exercising some of the land around projects and removing the landowner rights, it would seem, in this exercise. And so, there are concerns still standing about those existing amendments that have also affected the Papua LNG Project.

The other thing going forward, without pre-empting, there are legislation also coming to Parliament that continues to tamper with legislation around ownership of minerals and the establishment of companies and the likes outside of the transparent government process and the oversight of Parliament that we look forward to debating about that when it comes forward. All in all, I support this exercise because it demonstrates the government standing by its original commitment which is very important. We thank the partners that have invested into this significant project and we look forward to the feed being concluded. We look forward to the investment and the program starting because we know it will generate a lot of jobs. This means a lot of training for Papua New Guineans.

We know it will stimulate revenue into the government coffers and translate down into services for our people but at the same time we express concerns about where some of that revenue will be going, and I allude back to the debates we have had about the government channelling large amounts of government resources and revenue into entities that are not subject to this parliamentary process, scrutiny and oversight. And that is something that we must be very conscious of particularly in times when the economy is tough and we are looking for money. We know that significant dividend and other revenue streams are going to entities that are not subject to the parliamentary process.

Otherwise, I commend the Minister and the Government, and we look forward to this important project progressing as soon as possible.

**04/08**

**Mr JAMES MARAPE** (Tari-Pori – Prime Minister) – Mr Deputy Speaker, let me thank the Minister for Petroleum for bringing this amendment to Parliament to ensure that the *Oil*

*and Gas Act* is consistent and congruent to the Papua LNG agreement that was signed on 8 April, 2019.

The Papua LNG is a K12 billion to K13 billion project. We've had a series of meetings and consultations with the leader in Papua LNG project, which is Total. Total has given its full commitment that they will not delay and as I speak, they are in pre-FEED and as early as April next year they will be announcing FEED for this project. I have with the leadership of the minister to indicate to them that they must stick to their intentions. This allows them to go into pre-FEED and FEED and this will then secure them a Petroleum Development License under the existing regime in which they sign the Papua LNG Agreement.

The Member for Alotau has made a case in point for all our investors; Papua New Guinea is not a country that is disrespectful to the rule of law and agreements that we sign. You only have to look at our history in the oil and gas business or the mining industry. Whatever agreement that has been signed, even if governments come and go, but through the spirit and intent of those agreements and so long as it is consistent and hang in law then those agreements will stand the test of time and scrutiny.

I also commend the Minister, as we took office - and as the Member for Alotau did indicate - the project economics sit at 51 per cent to us and 49 per cent to them. We pushed higher to gain more out from that 51 per cent for a better definition of local content, a better definition of domestic market obligation and a better definition of what entails the strategic pipeline. Let me appreciate Total in the way they have responded. They came in with an element of flexibility that this country deserves to ensure that maximum gain, not just from the 51 per cent space, but from the total project is felt by our country. I want to appreciate the Gulf Provincial Government and the people for ensuring that they remain patient with this one.

In the last two years, domestic factors and, more importantly, the investment market place and investment destination for the gas business did compel Total to look elsewhere. They were looking at Mozambique with 80 TCF of gas compared to Papua LNG which has only 6.6 TCF of gas. But circumstances beyond Total's and our control made them look more towards us especially in relation to our country's strategic position with the option of spot market gas at premium price available much closer to home in so far as production and sale to our Asian market was concern. Total has given us full assurance that with this amendment, they will ensure to do their best to mobilize the project partners and just like PNG LNG Project, it is 70 per cent bank finance. The project equity partners will support with the residual of the cost that is needed to support this project to move forward. So, it is timely and I just want to thank the Gulf Provincial Government as well as the landowners for their patience. I give total assurance;



we don't want a situation that is similar to the PNG LNG Project, especially in respect to the landowner identification and discussions with the provincial government. These conversations must begin as soon as possible, and the new landowners will take their place, as well as the Gulf Provincial Government being given their rightful place by the Government.

**05/08**

That is an assurance that I will give to our landowners in PRL 15, as the Gulf Provincial Government goes through its last legal hurdle to ensure that the Papua LNG is progressing.

That is good news for the Treasurer to factor it in his economic modelling for 2022, 2023 and going forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am taking this time also to announce that our government is working full-swing to ensure that Wafi-Golpu Mine is progressing. PASCA A and P'nyang Gas projects are also being reviewed and these are activities that are concurrent and we are dealing with Papua LNG which should be off the block.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

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

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

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

**06/08**

The Parliament voted (the Deputy Speaker, **Mr Koni Iguan**, in the Chair) –

**AYES – 79**

**NOES – 0**

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

Bill read a third time.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Members, before we proceed onto Question Time, I will allow the Minister for Treasury to respond to yesterday's questions asked by the Member for Komo-Margarima.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **Answers to Previous Questions – BSP Money- Laundering**

**Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY** – Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Komo-Margarima for his questions in relation to our financial sector.

**07/08**

In relation to the first question on whether I am aware and what my department has done to address the conflicting statements by the Central Bank and FASU, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am aware of a public notice that was published by the Central Bank seeking to distance itself on actions taken by FASU against BSP for noncompliance. The notice clearly undermined FASU and therefore the Government's ability to regulate our financial system. I shall be issuing instructions to both Treasury and the Central Bank to provide me with all the details mentioned in that notice and I will determine the appropriate course of action.

On the question of releasing the names of the eight politically exposed persons (PEPs) identified by FASU; I am advised that FASU is not able to give that information because apparently, they are not at liberty to give it to this Parliament. But I intend to investigate further what appropriate actions are available at my department to deal with the PEPs that transferred several millions of kina to the Bank of South Pacific.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I was saying yesterday before the Chamber audio system malfunctioned, politically exposed persons are typically government officials, members of SOE boards, relatives and even close associates. I have yet to receive details from FASU so I am not aware if the culprit is a politician, ex-politician or even ex-prime minister.

On the identity of the high-risk politically exposed person that had credible allegations of money-laundering mentioned in the international media, I raised the matter with the

Governor of the Central Bank last night but he advised me that he does not have access to such information because it is the property of FASU which is an independent entity. He referred me to FASU but they are unwilling to give me that information because they not at liberty to do that. But I do recall back in 2019 that the Australian Financial Review did report that a K35 million mansion located on the Sydney Harbour had been sold to or lived in by a former Prime Minister from Papua New Guinea.

In regard to the senior management staff of the Bank of South Pacific that had been directed to be removed or replaced, and the question was whether it was the Chairman or the CEO, again, from the advice that I have received, I understand that the four most senior staff of the Bank of South Pacific from the CEO down are included in these four persons to have already resigned. FASU has decided to exclude the fourth person because apparently, he has been cooperating. The CEO and the Chairman of BSP have not resigned.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, in regard to the reasons why the Governor of our Central Bank disassociated the Bank of PNG from FASU and defended the Bank of South Pacific against the FASU's report, only the Governor of Central Bank can answer that; especially why he did so even before the investigation is yet to be completed.

**08/08**

It is a concern to the government and I shall be asking the Governor for an explanation on this matter.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

### **Supplementary Question**

#### **FASU Report**

**Mr PETER O'NEILL** –Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Komo-Magarima for raising those very important questions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Member's call to reveal the names of the eight politically exposed persons at BSP, and the obligation is on FASU, BPNG and BSP. This is a public matter.

I understand that it is a politically convenient matter for the Treasurer to set up his questions for his own political point-scoring.

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, many of us in this House had professions or owned businesses before we came to Parliament. Some of us have very good credit ratings with the financial

institutions in the country. So, to tarnish people's reputation by false information and accusations as such that the Treasurer is now alluding is simply wrong.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Member, ask your question.

**Mr PETER O'NEILL** – Yes, I am coming to my question. The onus is for the Treasurer to now provide evidence.

Mr Speaker, I do not own a K35 million mansion in Australia or anywhere else in the world. He has to provide that evidence.

Mr Speaker, I have never transferred any money out of BSP –

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Member, I have asked you to go straight to your question.

**Mr PETER O'NEILL** – My questions are;

(1) Is he going to name these eight people? The onus is upon him to do so.

He has an obligation as the Treasurer to protect the financial institutions of this country, namely BPNG, BSP and Kina Bank. I say this because two of the foreign banks are leaving the country; Westpac and ANZ.

Before we know it none of us will be doing businesses with any of our banks in this country because of such baseless accusation which can destroy the ability of Papua New Guineans to do business in their own country.

(2) Is he going to protect these institutions, making sure that they comply with the law?

The laws are already in existence so is he going to protect BPNG –

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Member, I will allow you to debate this in the Grievance Debate but if you like, you can ask the question straight to the Minister.

**Mr PETER O'NEILL** – I want him to provide the names of the individuals and the evidence that he has. Is he going to also protect the financial institutions of this country?

I say this because nobody in this world will want to do businesses with Papua New Guinea if we continue to accuse our own agencies of government and financial institutions in the country.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I thank the Member for Ialibu-Pangia for his false allegations against the Office of the Treasurer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I mentioned very clearly, as soon as I receive details on the investigation report, I will then decide on appropriate action. I am prepared to provide a detailed statement on the contents of that report if and when I receive it.

Whether I will defend this country's institutions such as the Central Bank and the other commercial bank, of course, all governments will defend those institutions which they have oversight of.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in fact, I do not think a government in the last 20 years since the *Central Bank Act was amended in 1992* has ever conducted a review which we have already announced to do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are four terms of reference and the Independent Advisory Committee is halfway through its job. It has been very productive and has caught up with a lot of its work.

Hopefully, in the next meeting of Parliament, I will invite the Member for Ialibu-Pangia, if he is very keen on supporting our institutions, to support the government with some of its proposed amendments to its act.

**09/08**

#### **Status on Hospital Project Funding**

**Mr SASINDRAN MUTHUVEL** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I also direct my question to the Treasurer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to know the status of the three hospital projects; Kimbe, Mendi and Tari, which Cabinet had made decisions in the beginning of 2020, and were to be funded by the European Union agency.

Is Treasurer aware of the loan terms and agreements of these projects, and can he explain why there is a delay?

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thank the Governor of West New Britain for his question on the three hospitals that have been funded through our capital Budget this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I'll ask the Member to put his question in writing and so I can respond to him in full detail on the situation with the warranting and the availability of cash.

**Mr JEFFREY KOMAL** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for recognizing the people of Nipa Kutubu. I will direct my question to the Minister for Inter-Government Relations.

I want to give a brief background information before asking my question. We all know that there is eight months remaining before the 2022 National General Elections. In Nipa-Kutubu district new council wards are being created and in Nipa LLG alone they have created almost 20 council wards. I believe that this is being done without the knowledge of the office of LLG president and chamber, and I too am not aware.

I also have a copy of the minutes of the provincial assembly meeting, where it states that the creation of wards in Nipa had not been approved. This is not only happening in Nipa-Kutubu electorate alone but the whole of Southern Highland including the Minister's electorate of Imbonggu, and I have documents to confirm that.

My good Minister, I know these documents have reached your office, therefore, I am advising against the creation of new wards because we have enough council wards in Nipa LLG. Why should we create new wards when here on the Floor of National Parliament we are looking for money to pay ward councilors?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Member, ask your question.

#### **Creation of new Council Wards – Nipa-Kutubu LLG**

**Mr JEFFREY KOMAL** – Mr Deputy Speaker, my question is; can the Minister clarify whether the submission to create new wards in Nipa-Kutubu will be approved and sent to NEC for gazettal?

The Minister has to inform the people of Nipa-Kutubu through this Floor of Parliament because we have enough council wards in the electorate.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**10/08**

**Mr PILA NININGI** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I would like to thank the Member Nipa-Kutubu for his question regarding the Council Wards.

We have a process we must all follow. At this point in time, it has not gone to NEC and we have not done anything, but it is now in progress. When the process is complete and if it requires anything further then I will take it to NEC who then will, have to make the final decision whether to be approved or not.

**Mr Jeffrey Komal** – Point of Order! This has not gone through a proper procedure. It has not come through Nipa LLG Council meeting and my president does not know as well. So, if you state this has not gone through the proper procedure then how can you send it to NEC for gazettal?

Thank you.

**Mr PILA NININGI** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. If it has not gone through the right procedure, certainly it will not go to NEC. Firstly, you have to establish the system and procedures are followed. If the process is not right it will not go through but if the process is right it will go through and yes, this is my obligation to take it to NEC then NEC being the alternate body will make a decision.

So, you do not have to worry about it, knowing the system is big enough it will take care of itself. I am saying this while I have the floor.

I have a council badge for each of those councillors throughout the country. This is the council badge we used to have in the colonial times but now we don't, so, we now have to restore the council's authority back on the ground to be recognized.

I appeal to all members to assist me to buy uniforms and badges for all councils to wear to exercise their authority.

Also, there are regulations prepared that guide us on how to look after these councils.

**Sir Puka Temu** – Point of Order! The Minister is informing Parliament on something that was never asked for. So, can he disregard it.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Thank you, your Point of Order is in order.

**Mr PILA NININGI** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. But it is important; I am sure Member for Abau and his ward councillors would want to know this.

Therefore, for the benefit of all of us, councillors' authorities must be respected.

Thank you.

## Funding for Maritime Provinces

**Mr DOUGLAS TOMURIESA** –Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of the people of my remote electorate in Papua New Guinea; the ‘Island of love’ and the people of Kiriwina-Goodenough.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I direct my questions to the Minister for Transport and the current acting Leader of Government Business and also Member for Goilála.

11/08

Mr Deputy Speaker, recently, we lost six of our people travelling between the waters of Alotau, Esa’ala and the islands of Kiriwina. We have recovered the boat, but the bodies are yet to be found. One of the bodies was recovered while the other five are still being searched; the bodies are lost out in the sea.

For the benefit of this House, let me explain where Kiriwina-Goodenough is situated because some of you may not know where it is. This electorate is a group of islands situated in Milne Bay Province and our closest electorate is Esa’ala. We also share border with Alotau Open, Samarai-Murua and the Ijivitari electorate in Northern Province is our closest neighbour. We also share border with Morobe and West New Britain provinces; to be more precise, Kandrian-Gloucester and the waters of Bougainville. That is where we are.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Jomard Passage has got two entry points. One of the entry points is towards the border of Australia and the other entry point is called Bomatu Point and it is in the Kiriwina-Goodenough waters.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like the Minister to take note that the ships that carry our gas and oil travel through the waters of Kiriwini-Goodenough. And it is also a very important trading route for the international ships.

Ships carrying minerals from OK Tedi for export use this passage; all our agricultural products both for exports and imports use this passage. The importance of these waters must be considered,

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am saying this because this is the international highway for both local and international water traffic and I am talking about sea transport.

Mr Deputy Speaker, referring to the *National Maritime Safety Authority Act 2003*, certified on the 25 November 2003, I raise the following questions:

- (1) Is there funding available for maritime provinces and districts?
- (2) If funds are available, when can we see some infrastructure development in these waters?



I know, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Minister has been in contact with the leaders of Milne Bay Province in regard to Jomard Passage, especially with the Minister for Tourism.

(3) When can we see some navigation equipment or monitoring system installed in our waters to provide safety for our travelling public and the general commuters at large, especially the installations of radios in strategic locations between Alotau, Samarai-Murua, Esa'ala and Kiriwina-Goodenough electorate that I represent?

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr WILLIAM SAMB** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would like to thank the good Member for Kiriwina-Goodenough for his important questions.

Whilst on the subject regarding Jomard Passage, I also want to acknowledge the former leaders of Milne Bay Province who have taken on this issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, since becoming the Minister, Jomard Passage is one of my key points which I wanted to address in my term. Before I answer the Member's question, let me give an update on where we are at with the progress report in relation to Jomard Passage.

**12/08**

He is correct in saying that a lot of international vessels pass through this important and significant but yet fragile Jomard Passage. Our Government has already endorsed and sought approval for declaration of Jomard Passage as a compulsory pilotage area. I did visit the site couple of months ago with the Minister for Culture and Tourism.

I want all the leaders in Milne Bay Province to assist in getting this important issue out of the way. A meeting will be held in Milne Bay between the international stakeholders and the leaders, and the Minister for Culture and Tourism through his DDA are mobilising the people living in the vicinity of the Jomard Passage. I have asked the National Maritime Safety Authority (NMSA) to plot out the actual entry and exit of this passage so that we deal with the stakeholders in the vicinity accordingly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, going back to the question in relation to whether there is funding available for maritime provinces; the Transport Department has launched a National Transport Plan and has identified two programs that are important in maritime areas. One of them is the vessels and jetties program, and it's been budgeted so that funding will be made available this year. We are working closely with the Department of Treasury to roll out the program on vessels and jetties.

Whilst on that, I want fair distribution of resources in the Budget to address the maritime issues in our coastal provinces because most of our cargoes are transported on water transport

In terms of infrastructures, NMSA is working in partnering with ADB and discussed on coastal areas starting from Vanimo to Milne Bay and from Western Province to Milne Bay. I will instruct my officers concern to prepare the report of the meeting and report back to Parliament in the next Sitting. I cannot do anything about infrastructure without funding and I have clearly mentioned that but with other issues, I will discuss it with the Member.

But as for Jomard Passage, I urge all the leaders of Milne Bay to come and we all discuss and address this important issue.

### **Influx of illegal Immigrants**

**Mr BENNY ALLAN**– Mr Deputy Speaker, I direct my questions to the Minister for Labour and Industrial Relations. I have three questions prepared by someone whom I refer to as whistleblower on some of the activities happening in the department.

**13/08**

In recent times we have experienced influx of foreign illegal immigrants coming here and conducting businesses and getting employed at technically and semi-skill jobs through dubious and falsified certificates. These businesses and jobs are supposed to be reserved for our citizens. The Department of Labour and Industrial Relations is bestowed with the mandate of labour administration; processing of work permits; conducting enforcement; monitoring and evaluating work at the workplace; and National Training Council.

**Mr Lekwa Gure** – Point of Order! The Minister for Labour and Industrial Relations is not in the Chamber at this point in time.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Member for Unggai-Bena, the Minister is not in the Chamber. You may reserve your right to ask the questions later but you can also redirect to it the Prime Minister.

**Mr BENNY ALLAN** – Mr Deputy Speaker, I re-direct my questions to the Prime Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, without any ministerial dialogue or any statutory business paper, the secretary of Labour has seen fit to transfer two important functions or mandates of the Labour

Department; work permit processing was transferred to the Immigration Citizenship Authority and Labour Mobility Program transferred to the Department of Finance.

My questions are:

(1) Can the Prime Minister inform this Parliament why the Labour Department has seen appropriate to transfer these functions leaving rest of the supporting functions of monitoring and enforcement, labour administration, National Training Council and others behind?

(2) How can these functions operate under the different management or locations without the cheques and balances located at the Department of Labour and Industrial Relations?

Given the Covid-19 pandemic and the downturn in the employment opportunities for our citizens, the administrative delay of industrial relation cases at the Department of Labour and Industrial Relations is outrageous because they are either not adequately addressed or set before the Arbitration Tribunal and lasting more than five to six years to address these issues. One typical example is a case involving a terminated Air Niugini staff whose case has been administratively dragged on for over six years even when the issue was registered in Port Moresby where the headquarter of Department of Labour and Industrial Relations is located.

(3) Given today's information technological advancement, can the Minister or the Prime Minister inform Parliament and the people of Papua New Guinea whether he has any plans to systemise and consolidate data and information processing so that our citizens with industrial disputes are efficiently addressed and assisted on a timely manner thus their welfare and job securities are not disadvantaged?

**14/08**

This is systematic corruption happening in the department like in many other departments. We've been talking about a health pandemic and we can also refer to this as corruption pandemic that is systematically happening everywhere in the government departments as well as in our districts and provinces.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a copy of an audit report which was given to me by the whistleblower who prepared these questions. I am not sure whether the Minister has received a copy of the internal audit report.

#### **Labour - Internal Audit Findings**

(4) As per the report findings, can the Minister inform the House if there are about four to five criminal investigations registered at the Fraud Squad Office against some senior officers of his department, including the secretary, for knowingly and internationally engaging three to

four different contractors in 2019 and 2020 to supply IT equipment costing almost K2 million in total, which has not been delivered to date?

The audit report further reveals glaring double-dipping and misapplication of public funds to corruptly enrich individuals and persons in high positions and or closely linked to the head of the bureaucracy. A classic situation is a K200,000 cheque that was drawn from the Public Funds to pay for a hire-car for a public relations officer of the department. This public relations officer is the main figure in bringing in contractors at his choice or preference and picking up cheques for the suppliers by passing *Public Finance and Procurement Act*. An interesting scenario was picking up a cheque for a supplier on Christmas or Boxing Day, which is a public holiday.

(5) Is the Minister aware of this internal audit report?

(6) If he is then what is he doing about it?

Systemic corruption is taking place in that department and there is a lot of evidence in this report that I do not have time to read out, but I want the Minister to take appropriate and necessary action against the officers involved including his secretary.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – I will ask the Prime Minister to respond.

**Mr JAMES MARAPE** – Thank you, Mr Speaker. Firstly, I want to thank the –

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Minister, since you were out of the House when the question was asked, I have asked the Prime Minister to respond on your behalf.

Mr Prime Minister, go ahead.

**Mr JAMES MARAPE** – Mr Speaker, I thank the Member for Unggai-Bena for his questions. We are here to ask these kinds of questions so that the issues can be addressed and we can smoothly run our country.

I ask the Honourable Member to put all his questions in writing to the Minister and also send a copy to me and I give you assurance that we will look into these issues that he has raised.

Corruption exists within the government systems so we have to identify and address them. And I must say that I am very happy with the whistle-blower for raising these issues.

15/08

When the Marape-Basil government took office, we had expedited the process of passing the *Whistleblowers Act* as well as that of ICAC, and I thank the former Attorney-General who is sitting on the other side of the House for his work.

We had advertised the ICAC commissioner position overseas, so that we do not play politics in Parliament because as leaders, we stand scrutiny for corruption and we must not tolerate systematic corruption in our government system, rank and file.

I thank the Member for these questions and ask him to put it in writing so that we will look into it. I also want to assure the whistleblower that he or she is protected under the *Whistleblowers Act*. In any system of government, whistleblowing must go ahead to fight the issue of corruption.

I thank the whistleblower and because he stated that the case had been reported to the police, the police don't need direction from the Police Minister to carry out orders. When there is a complaint laid, they must act accordingly. Why wait for the member to ask the question on the Floor of Parliament! So, when the issue of complaint and corruption comes, police must quickly act on them because many times, such files just sit there and collect dust.

I'm sure that the Minister for Labour is taking note of this issue and he will respond to the questions. I assure the Honourable Member that we'll look into the issue that has being raised.

The Labour Department is one of the sensitive departments that protect the labour rights of our working people in this country and also ensures that foreigners entering the workforce do not take up the work of Papua New Guineans. The law requirement is there to ensure that people are working within the confinement of our existing laws.

The officers who are in charge of this section do not need the Minister to polish this sector. It is the responsibility of the secretary of Labour Department to polish the existing law under his leadership. The work of the agencies is to ensure that we follow laws whether they are labour laws or other laws.

So, I give assurance to this House and the country that the questions raised by the Member for Unggai-Bena, we will have a detailed response on the issues, including investigation into what is happening in the Labour Department and checking up on police to ensure those reports are being prosecuted and the evidence compiled. If they have a case to respond to then those who have committed the offences will be charged accordingly.

Thank you very much for these very important questions, and please send the report in and the minister and his department and all of government will give due respond to it later on.

## Special Protected Areas Bill

Mr GARRY JUFFA – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for giving the opportunity to ask a series of questions which I would like to direct to the Minister for Environment and Conservation.

Before I proceed, I just want to give a few notices here in regards to my question. I would like to read the *Fourth Goal* of the *National Constitution* and *Directive Principle* which states that “Papua New Guinea natural resources and its environment should be conserved and used for the collective benefits of all and should be replenished for future generations”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Papua New Guinea is 97 per cent owned by our landowners. They are the primary custodians and stewards of our nation’s natural environment of which the terrestrial aspect of 461,910 kilometers, which holds seven per cent of the world’s biodiversity and 3540 kilometers sea area, which hosts 10 per cent of the world’s marine life. Our natural biodiversity is the home to many endemic species including the national Bird of Paradise, giant birdwing butterfly and many other creatures that are yet to be discovered by the west.

16/08

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to ask my question in regards to the long awaited *Special Protected Areas Bill*. This bill has been in the making for some years now and it is very important we pass this bill as quickly as possible.

This bill will give powers back to our land and resource owners to enable them to make use of their natural environment in a sustainable manner and they may engage with government and reputable development partners and investors.

Currently, as you look around Papua New Guinea, we have sufficient evidence of the destruction of our natural environment by ruthless organisations that come here without consideration to our future or our environment.

This bill will give greater protection and rights that our natural resource owners and land owners need.

My question is:

Mr Minister, can you please tell us what is delaying this bill and when do we anticipate this bill being tabled so that it can become law and afford our resource and land owners the protection they deserve and also give them the opportunities that they need so that they may be able to develop their natural resources in a sustainable manner with reputable investors and with our Government?

Thank you.

**Mr WERA MORI** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and the Honourable Governor for asking a very important question.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Members of Parliament and Honourable Governor, I do not know why it is taking too long for this very significant bill to come to Parliament for us to have it enacted. It is so important because we have a duty and obligation to protect and conserve some of our pristine biodiversity. In fact, if you may not know, we have some unique species like the New Guinea singing bird that is found between Azimba, Yongai -

**Sir Puka Temu** – Point of Order! Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a very simple question to the Minister; why was the bill delayed? Stop repeating the same facts. Since you are the responsible minister, just table the bill for us to vote.

**Mr WERA MORI** – Mr Deputy Speaker, I am trying to explain the significance of this important bill. It is somewhere in between the State Solicitor and Legislative Council and I am sure by virtue of this question, I would appreciate if it can make its way here to have it enacted and protect our environment.

Thank you.

### **Church Health Services**

**Mr MEHARRA MINNE KIPEFA** –Mr Deputy Speaker, my questions are for the Health Minister, however, since he is not here, I re-direct them to the Prime Minister.

We have been focusing on planning and implementing Covid-19 pandemic regulations, but my questions are related to the mainline health services. As we all know, the health services are slowly declining in the rural and urban areas.

17/08

A particular group of people have been working tirelessly in the rural areas and they are the church health workers. I understand there was an NEC decision made in 2013 about the disparity between the church health workers' salary with the government health workers' salary. This was discussed in NEC and a decision was made in a decision number of which I am not sure.

My questions are directed to the Health Minister and the Prime Minister can take note.

(1) When is the Government going to implement that NEC decision for our church health workers?

Whilst on that, a lot of services provided by the church health facilities are slowly coming to a close because there are no funds to support their operations in the rural areas.

Last week, the Health Minister mentioned increasing the health workers in our Health Department.

(2) Can the Minister also incorporate the church health workers to increase the number of health workers in the country?

(3) Can the Minister also state clearly to the Floor and the people of this nation; as the providers of the health services in the rural areas, when will the government assist the church organisations?

This will help them continue their very vital job of providing health services in remote areas where the government cannot reach.

We have established nursing colleges. A lot of colleges have been established and many graduates have no place to work, so they go and work with the church health services. A lot of graduates are with the church health services, therefore, the government should support the church health services through the Health Department.

Thank you, very much.

**Mr JAMES MARAPE** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thank the Member for Obura-Wonenara for his questions.

Firstly, I would like to pay my respects by acknowledging the passing on of one of our renown and fine daughter of this country, Professor Evelyn Lavu who passed on last week. She was our lead in Medical and Scientific Advisor on National Covid-19 Response.

Many of our health workers work in trying circumstances, whether in church health services or in public-run health services and we do take note of all that.

I want to make mention that Professor Evelyn Lavu was our first female medical professor.

Coming back to the question that Member for Obura-Wonenara has raised; church health services plays a very important complementary role on service delivery in our country. They complement and assist the government very well and in fact, in areas where government health services are not present.

So, let me place on record not just as a government, but on behalf of our country; our greatest appreciation and respect to our churches and those who work in the church-run health



centres. I would like to thank them very much and we are committed to ensuring that the pay issue as well as the upkeep of the church-run services are worked on as we speak.

**18/08**

But according to our weekly budget management settled at Treasury, Finance and Planning; to the best of our ability, what can be supported is being channeled across to them. In our National Health Plan for 2021 to 2031, we are looking at how best we can amplify the role of churches in picking up the health sector; two of our sectors.

The Marape-Basil government feels that churches must be stepped up. We are looking at the Church and Health Services Sector in a similar approach to what is now happening in the Education Sector.

In the Educational Sector, there was a reform some few years back when I was the then Minister for Education where the teachers were paid in one unified payroll system. So, we picked out the recurrent component of the expenditure into the National Pay System and allowed the school administration to be run by the churches themselves.

That is something we want to do for the Health Sector so that we have one unified pay system. Those who work in the Health Sector in our country are paid by the one payroll that goes out every fortnight and the administrative component be given back to the churches, so that they can run the hospitals at their own will.

The reform is put in place to avoid this sort of adhoc arrangement based on budget availability for pay by the administration. The Minister for Treasury, Finance and Planning with the Department of Health will look into how best we can synchronise and allow the recurrent aspect to be taken care of by the Government. And allow the church to run the administration of the services.

This is a very good question and I give assurance to the Member. And to the church health workers, we know you are working for your country and we appreciate your services and you remain our utmost priority. For structural impediments, in the new health plan that is being developed as we speak.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

## GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed –

That grievances be noted.

**Mr KENNEDY WENGE** (Nawae) – Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for recognising the people of Nawae. But before do, I want to congratulate and say good morning to the people of Motu-Koitabu and the people of PNG for supporting a son from Motu-Koitabu to this Parliament who is sitting right beside me. I congratulate him on being elected as the Member for Moresby North-West.

With that, I also thank the Member for Lae and Minister for Lands and Physical Planning in accompanying me to my electorate on Sunday to open a new classroom.

I was delayed by my trip back to the electorate where I arrived a week late and it's my first day in Parliament today. And all the 111 members would agree with me that each electorate differs in terms of land mass; some members come from some of the remotest places in the country. As the Member for Kiriwina-Goodenough Island has mentioned, his electorate is located far from the mainland. As for me, Nawae is located right into the bush surrounded by big mountain ranges and some of these mountains are known to Papua New Guinea.

It took me one week to travel back to Lae by road and got on the plane back to Port Moresby. With these long-distance travels, we do at times encounter problems like flat tires or even cancellation of flights back to Port Moresby. All these problems, Mr Deputy Speaker, you as the custodian of this House didn't take into consideration and listed the names of the members absent.

For instances on today's daily newspaper, *Post-Courier*, a roll-call was taken and I was listed first on the list for being absent from Parliament Meeting. I am not a student, but a member mandated by the people. Why is my name on this list? I went to my electorate to build a new classroom.

And I am not the Member for Moresby North-East, Honourable John Kaupa, who is closer to where the Parliament House is located. My electorate is located in the remotest place and it takes weeks for me to travel back to Lae by car. We face some of the hardships like flat tires or even miss flights back to Port Moresby.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as the custodian of this House, you should have called us on our mobile phones to ask why we are not present during Parliament meeting before giving our names to the newspapers or *Facebook*.

19/08

I am not pleased about it. If I had knowledge on how to use *Facebook*, I would have deleted the post. I am only a Member of Parliament and I do not have the authority to ban such publications but Parliament could impose such a ban. If Parliament proposed a legislation to ban such publications, I would be the first Member to stand up and support it.

Such publications are bad for our public image and imply that we are actually not attending meetings of Parliament on time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, factual information must be obtained on why we as Members are coming late to meetings of Parliament. They must understand that we are late because of our electoral duties or obligations in the remotest parts of our electorates which are inaccessible by road.

Mr Deputy Speaker, under the *Standing Orders*, the Parliament is required to sit for 63 days in a calendar year and if a member misses three Sittings of Parliament, the Speaker may through the House Committee deliberate and penalise the member accordingly by announcing it on the Floor of Parliament. I have missed only a day and I am surprised to see my name being published in the newspapers. Mr Prime Minister, what would you do if you were on duty travel overseas and your name appears on the newspaper stating your absence in a Parliament Sitting?

Mr Deputy Speaker, what would you do if you were put in a similar situation?

Before our names are published, they must ask us why we were absent. It is wrong to publish our names without properly ascertaining our reasons for the nonattendance or coming late to Parliament meetings. I am a leader mandated by my people to represent them in Parliament and these sorts of allegations tarnish our image and reputations.

For instance, now honourable Member for Kokopo is not present so should they just go ahead and publish his nonattendance. No! Ask him why he is not in the Chamber and find out whether he is sick, in his electorate or on duty travel? If we find members just staying away in hotels then you can publish it, but they should not publish their social life after hours.

Finally, as Member for Nawae, I would appreciate if I am consulted on why I was not available in the Chamber before my name is published in the newspapers and I say this on behalf of the 111 Members of Parliament. The *Standing Orders* are there so let's abide by it. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr BELDEN NAMAHA** (Vanimo-Green – Leader of the Opposition) – Thank you, Mr Speaker. At least now the Chair is recognising me. I was not given the opportunity to raise my questions during Question Time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I also want to join the Grievance Debate. Last week and during this week, I raised several questions to the Prime Minister with reference to the vaccination in the country.

**20/08**

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was not happy with the answer given by the Prime Minister because when the National Executive Council makes a decision or this Parliament passes a law it becomes the country's law and we must follow it. The Prime Minister cannot come and tell us NEC has made a decision that vaccination is not compulsory and then he says that companies are at liberty, which creates a loophole for companies to mandate vaccination.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we must all know that the right to freedom is not an unqualified right but an absolute right; nothing can qualify the right to freedom of our people. We are born with it; we will live with it and we will die with it. I say this because when I asked the question to the Prime Minister, his response has now given liberty for companies to make vaccination compulsory on our people.

Now, whose interests, rights, freedom and welfare do we represent as Members of Parliament on this Floor. I thought that we are for the people, of the people and by the people, but we are not. As, we speak today, Papua New Guineans are being sacked from their jobs and some are even being laid off work because of choosing not to be vaccinated.

**Mr James Marape** – Point of Order! The Opposition Leader must be reminded that he can't just make general statements. You must make reference to a case which has occurred. I have to clarify his misrepresentation of my statement. He asked for the Government's national policy regarding Covid-19 vaccination.

The Government policy still remains that vaccination is not compulsory but he is learned enough to know that the *Workplace Safety Act* exists and every employer and their conduct of employment is conducted under that Act. It is in their interest for the safety of their workplace, they have that autonomy to look into the workplace safety issues. Never forget the health of one person affects the health of another person so it must be seen in this context.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this is no joke or fun, we do not want the economy of this country to be stifled by the increase of Covid-19 cases in the workplaces. Employers have their call to make. The general policy of the government is that vaccination is not compulsory in our country but at the workplaces, it is the employer's call. I will give you an example; LNG has workplace safety requirements in place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will sit down but I want the Opposition Leader to speak within the context of the issue and not sensationalize this issue of Covid-19.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Thank you, Mr Prime Minister. Honourable Opposition Leader, you have heard clearly and have noted what was said. Any Member of Parliament who has grievances will be allowed to make their statements but for now, I will allow the Opposition Leader to continue with his grievance debate.

**Mr BELDEN NAMAHAH** – Mr Speaker, while I do understand the *Workplace Safety Act*, vaccination is a totally separate issue, I am talking about the rights and freedom of our people. When we make a decision, we must stand by it. Companies who operate in this country work under our legislation; we make the laws and they operate under them.

What the Prime Minister is telling us that there are two sets of rules; one for our citizens and the other for the companies that operate in our country. In the workplaces, there is already the ‘new normal’ which is being observed –

**21/08**

**Mr James Marape** – Point of Order! The Opposition Leader should be responsible to the nation. He must not be misconceiving statements to create fallacy and misrepresentation. He must show prudence and responsibility to the nation and rise above shallow politics. The safety of the nation is at stake as well as economic and individual safety.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Thank you, Prime Minister.

Honourable Opposition Leader, before you speak, the Prime Minister has already responded to your question during Question Time and made his statement very clear. This is a sensitive issue and any comment that you raise, be sure that you do not bring confusion to the public on what we do.

**Mr BELDEN NAMAHAH** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am actually trying to have him explain his confusion. He has one law for our people and another for the company.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Opposition Leader, you have only three minutes left.

**Mr BELDEN NAMAHA** – He took up most of my debate time. You should extend my time to debate because I want him to make a decision as Prime Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our people out there are now confused. Their jobs have been threatened and most of them have left their jobs. That is my point and you have to come up with one clear-cut decision as the Prime Minister of the country. If I were you, I will punish the companies who are enforcing compulsory vaccination on our citizens. I will defend the rights of my citizens more than the rights of the company because that is why I am in Parliament representing my people. It's the most important thing; we forget why we are here. We did not use our qualification to become Members of Parliament. We are mandated by our people to be on the Floor of Parliament. That is why our people's rights, freedom, interest and welfare is paramount, and that is my point.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want the Executive Government under the leadership of the Prime Minister to tell our people which decision is the right one. You cannot say one is at liberty and the other is not compulsory. When it is not compulsory then it's all across the board and so practice the new normal in the workplace. That is the way you go and cannot give the companies the right to impose mandatory vaccination on our citizens. Workplace safety is same as practicing the new normal.

**Mr James Marape** – Point of Order! Don't insult the intelligence of all companies. On record in the last two years, all companies operating in our country have been sensitive to government directions to comply with the new normal.

From the companies I know, I have not yet received on my desk and neither through the Labour Minister a complaint from a labour union that their rights have been breached. The Opposition Leader has to table this on the Floor. You can't just make a blanket statement indicating that there is an outright abuse of this.

The labour union has to come out and stated that the employee rights have been abused. It is totally irresponsible for the learned politician to make a blanket statement that will hurt our economy.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Opposition Leader, your time has lapsed.

**Mr BELDEN NAMAHA** – Why demand vaccination? Companies should be demanding tests on Covid-19 and not vaccination. So, let's make a clear line, Mr Prime Minister, make a decision, don't come here and tell us one thing and do a different thing.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Opposition Leader, we have other members standing for the Grievance Debate and so I will ask you to stop.

Thank you.

**Mr Sam Akoita** – Point of Order! Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been standing here for one week to ask questions, but you have not recognised me. Maybe my face is black or is it because of Bougainville asking for independence.

*(Laughter in the Chamber)*

22/08

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**– Honourable Member, you have raised a wrong comment. I would like you to withdraw your statement and resume your seat.

**Mr Sam Akoitai** – Mr Deputy Speaker, have you noticed, I have been one of the members who has been here since the Parliament was suspended until the ringing of the bells.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw my statement but I am upset for not being recognised.

Thank you.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Member, your Point of Order is in order and you will be recognised. I have been fair to both sides; Government and Opposition.

We have Opposition Members standing; therefore, I am calling upon them. I assure you that I will give you opportunity after the Member for Rigo.

**Mr LEKWA GURE** (Rigo) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for recognising the people of Rigo and giving me the opportunity to contribute to this Grievance Debate.

Firstly, I would like to join all leaders in formally congratulating the newly-elected Member for Moresby North-West, Honourable Lohia Boe Samuel, for his election and elevation to this Honourable House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, through the Chair, let me endeavour to state his congratulatory message in his motuan dialect;

“Chief, due to your victorious win as a leader, we the people of Rigo, Central Province join in celebrating with your family and people as this is our Land and House”

Before I contribute to this Grievance Debate, I would like to remind all honourable Members in Parliament that we have very important national issues raging around us in the likes of the Covid-19 pandemic and this national crisis and shame of gender-based violence. Here we are with these important national issues and yet we trying to play petty politics for political point- scoring.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my contribution to this Grievance Debate is in relation to the report that was presented on this Floor of Parliament by the Special Parliamentary Committee on Gender Based Violence. I personally classify violence against women and girls as a national crisis and national shame for us. According to a report, Papua New Guinea's standing is at 161/162 countries; second-last from the bottom. We are placed between two countries, Yemen at the bottom and Chad just above up. These two countries are in chaos and on a war footing. So, if we are amongst this group, are we saying that we are in a war footing and have we declared war in Papua New Guinea? Are we are giving the opportunity to perpetrators to perpetrate and cause gender-based violence on our women folks? We all know they also fight men as well due to men inflicting bodily harm and violence on our women folks and it is embarrassing.

The point is, many of the perpetrators are family members; cousins, uncles and even fathers and grandfathers who are causing these shameful acts. These shameful acts are being inflicted on family members which is the basic unit of society.

**23/08**

So, if the family values and unity is being broken down, what that means is that we are also breaking down our society as well. How do we strengthen this basic family unit?

Let me propose some suggestions or solutions. One of them, Mr Deputy Speaker, is population policy. I do not know when was the last population policy in Papua New Guinea and I am not sure that we have one. If we do have one, the people will be aware of our population policy.

If we have a population policy, we will have some control over our population. Control over our people means, we should grow at the same rate, if not lower than our economic growth. Those are some of the contributing factors.

So, if we have to have a population policy, we should tie this down to other social services like health and education. For instance, if we have an education policy like school fee policy, we must tie this population policy to that particular policy. So, if we have children of three, the



government can assist, but when you have more than three children; the parents are obligated for their fees. So, something along those lines.

One of the important things that Sir Puka Temu brought to the attention when he debated on this issue, was for us to empower the women to make some important decisions that she must make in her life. For instance, the timing and the spacing of the number of children she has. If she is empowered to those important decisions then she will have some control over the family situation.

It is really sad to see the women themselves are organising awareness on this very issue in the public domain. For instance, in our district our SDA group of women will be organising a violence and abuse against women awareness at Hula village on 26 August, 2021. Hula is one of our biggest village in Rigo District.

So, they have approached me and I assured them that I will be present with my wife to support that important awareness. But it is the women who are doing this awareness. When they are going to do that awareness, who is going to listen to that message? The people who should listen to this message are the menfolk. The men should be there in support of the women.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we really need an attitude and behavioural change in Papua New Guinea by the men if we are going to stand this shameful trend in our country. Our women and girls do not feel safe in Papua New Guinea, not even in their homes or let alone in the streets. We really need, require and demand attitude and behavioural change of our menfolk, if we are going to have any impact on this issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me conclude my grievance debate. Perhaps, we should also look at some of our traditional practices which also contribute to violence against womenfolk. For instance, bride-price. After a man pays bride-price and this days, bride-price can go up to K200 thousand and if the man pays that amount of bride-price, he thinks the woman is his property and he can do anything he wants. When he lays his hand on the woman which he paid a lot of money, the family members of the women will wash their hands clean, turn a blind eye and will walk away.

Perhaps, we should think about legislating and putting caps on bride-prices so it does not give a man this sense of ownership of a woman folk. Marriage is a Holy institution, ordained by God himself. Marriage should be a partnership between man and woman. Not the man owning the woman or the woman owning the man, it must be an equal partnership if we are going to bring up good families; the basic unit of society so that this country can move forward in peace and harmony.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

24/08

**Mr SAM AKOITAI** (Central Bougainville) – Mr Deputy Speaker, I have two issues I want to debate on this Floor of Parliament.

But before I commence, I want to apologise for some of the remarks that I made earlier and I wish to withdraw them. I was only frustrated because I am one of the members who is on time before the Bell rings. But I don't get recognised for one week to ask my questions.

With that remark, I have two issues that I want to contribute to this debate. Most times we normally expect all our disciplinary forces in PNG; the Police and Defense Force personnel to carry out their duties in this country. But yet most times they do come under extreme pressure to maintain rule of law in this country. At the end of the day they too have their own problems to handle apart from their mandated duties. For instance, their welfare is not given much attention by the Government. The houses they reside in are not conducive enough and are in a bad state for humans to live in. Even the toilets have not been maintained for so long since they were built. These issues have been overlooked but country as a whole depends mostly on their services.

I have also noticed that those retired Police and Defence Force personnel both men and women are still waiting for their final entitlements to be settled by the State.

Can the Minister for Police and Defense do something about this issue because it's a time bomb ticking in front of us. You all must know that these are trained service men and women in both forces. I think they deserve a golden handshake in appreciation of the services they provided for our country. I raise this issue in here because it's a matter of importance.

We have two main issues faced by our country amongst many others and that's rule of law and the economy. If we don't maintain the rule of law then our economy won't grow. All our business men and women won't make any profit and prosper because of this very reason.

The second issue relates to Central Bougainville and the shares that Rio Tinto has transferred to the Independent State of PNG and ABG. I am not happy with these shares because they are worth nothing. They only gave us the figure. From my understanding, to restart the Paguna Mine, it needs US\$6 billion, which is about K20 billion. I will only agree to receive these shares if Rio Tinto can transfer 53 per cent of the K20 billion, including the shares given to us. In addition, there is talk that the National Government had transferred its 19 per cent to ABG. But again, the National Government must know that these shares are worth nothing. And I demand that if we were to reopen this mine 19 per cent of the K20 billion be given to ABG so that we can see that these shares are worth something at this time.

I have realised that the two devils who have destroyed the environment and polluted the water system in Paguna, Java River, have escaped without paying anything and yet giving us empty promises with these shares.

I want the National Government to have a serious discussion with Rio Tinto and both must come up with something better than what has been given to us. I really don't want these empty shares to us. We know that what is inside the pit is worth K61 billion, but to get to that K61 billion, you need a capital to restart that mine.

That's why I am saying that these shares which both parties have transferred are worth nothing.

**25/08**

Many times, we say that BCL has polluted the environment. The Independent State of Papua New Guinea was the partner to BCL and the state is responsible for damaging our environment in Bougainville. The water system was damaged and now there is life coming back after the mine was shut.

So, I urge the National Government and Rio Tinto to discuss these issues immediately, especially the transfer of shares and funds to re-open the mine. That will be a good compromise for us rather than just transferring shares. Shares that are worth nothing

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Dr LINO TOM** (Wabag – Minister for Fisheries) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Before I start, I would like to congratulate the Member for Moresby North-West and also pass my sincere condolence to the family of Dr Evelyn Lavu; one of our foremost experts on Haematology, who has passed away.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would like to debate briefly on the issue of Covid-19. Since Covid-19 came out about two years ago, there has been a lot of debate on it and the issues surrounding the vaccinations. I take note of the debate made by the good Opposition Leader and also the Prime Minister.

Before I start, let me give some statistics on Covid-19. These figures are taken from the *British Medical Journal* and are the latest figures on Covid-19.

There was a study done on a ratio of population including certain doctors, number of doctors, nurses and the general population.

On the doctors that were vaccinated, the vaccination rate of doctors was 92 per cent. The nurses vaccinated was 82 per cent and the ordinary population vaccinated was 64 per cent. The

doctors vaccinated at 92 per cent; the infection rate is 1.9 per cent. On the nurses vaccinated at 82 per cent; the infection rate is five per cent. The general population of 64 per cent that were vaccinated; the infection rate is 8.8 per cent.

So, when you see the trend it clearly shows that, when you get vaccinated the infection rate actually declines or drops. These are figures taken from the *British Medical Journal*.

There is another study done and published in one of the world's leading medical journals, the *Lancet Journal*. These are phase three studies, meaning that the findings are quite strong, in that, it showed that those people who have actually got vaccinated, the death rate in that population is zero. This means that it conferred or protected them after a point or two days of actually being infected. This showed that those that were vaccinated had a zero per cent death rate. None of those who were vaccinated ended up in critical care.

So, studies here show that vaccination is important for our population. There is no study to qualify or quantify the benefits of the 'new normal'.

In terms of public policy, what does a responsible government do? Based on the statistics that are presented, though anecdotal at this point in time, the statistics indicate that public policy should move in that space.

Now I gather the arguments presented by the Opposition Leader, for those people who do not want to be vaccinated; the *Constitution* confesses the absolute rights to life and liberty to all its citizens, and the same *Constitution* wants to protect the people who decide to be vaccinated.

**26/08**

I am looking at it from the other side; those who are vaccinated want to enter a workplace and they feel that their lives are being threatened by those who do not want to be vaccinated. What do we do? Do we decide that the *Constitution* should just protect the lives of those who do not want to get vaccinated or do we also decide that the same *Constitution* confers and provides for absolute rights for those people who actually want to be vaccinated?

So, we are being faced with a dilemma and when a nation is faced with such a dilemma as a responsible government it should look at the statistics and if it shows that Covid-19 is becoming a threat to our public health then any government should decide that we move in that policy space.

**Mr Belden Namah** – Point of Order! The Minister is relating to international data or statistics but are our statistics in order? Stop referring to outside statistics! Dr Mola once said,

“Papua New Guineans will fall like flies in the streets”, and today, Papua New Guineans are still walking around on the streets.

Now, you tell me, what is the study?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Honourable Opposition Leader, let the Minister complete his debate. I think he will get to what he is trying to explain.

**Dr LINO TOM** – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I take note of what the Opposition Leader is saying and so far, we have lost 200 lives, including a couple of parliamentary staff; those are the statistics that we have on hand. What do you provide contrary to that? Can you tell us which adverse effects from the vaccination that is so detrimental that we should stop vaccination? Currently, in this country there is no evidence at all.

So, based on the data which we have collected, we are moving into that policy space. When the public health is at risk, public health measures are put together by a government, and that is what this government has done.

There are certain other facts about vaccination that I would want to state here; the Covid-19 vaccination is not only vaccination we are receiving in the country. There are many others like TB, Polio, and et cetera. What the vaccination does is that it does not confer you or give you 100 per cent immunity, we will still be at risk of being infected. So, when we come into public places and a vaccinated person feels that his life is threatened because someone didn't want to get vaccinated, it presents a dilemma.

Now, this is where companies' health security measures come into place. So, for me, it is incumbent on each company depending on the health measures they have taken to prescribe or impose the policy on vaccination.

The other point I would like to clear, based on what the Opposition Leader has said, a lot of research that is done around the medical space is actually done overseas so based on their findings, we develop our public health measures in this country. We do have our own research that is ongoing but it requires a big population sample size before you come up with a public health measure that is driven universally. This is why we can't wait until we come up with the statistics to make decisions, we have to learn from the world and that is what we are doing.

I think that Covid-19 should not be politicised in this country because it is a serious health issue. We have experts who are actually driving that policy and we should leave it to them to make those statements and we should not be listening to street doctors.

27/08

They will always come up with their opinions, but not based on good health safe packages that are based on universal principles in this country.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr PETER NUMU** (Eastern Highlands) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I'd like to stress on money issues and every time when we come here, we argue that our provinces and districts need money, but now we are in a situation where we are hit hard by Covid-19.

Each province is experiencing shortfall in terms of tax collection and businesses are going down. Now, it's about time to talk about how best each province can make money to support the government during such time. I'd like to talk about the strength of my province that relies on coffee and how best it can bring money into this country.

Also, one of the sectors that many times we turn a blind eye on is agriculture and I will particularly talk about coffee. Coffee is a big industry, especially in the Highlands provinces. It's our backbone but it is dominated by international coffee exporters at the expense of hard-working farmers. If we look carefully at the calculations of how many coffee bags going out and money coming into the country, it's very big.

I can remember a conversation with a Chinese company and they wanted one billion coffee bags from Papua New Guinea per season and the calculation is about K1,300,000, 000. That's the money that will come directly into the country if we strategise or align ourselves properly. It helps in two forms; it solves the foreign exchange issues; and we generate money directly into our simple people pocket.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it's a big cashflow in there but yet, we are still keeping a blind eye on this sector. Most of the international coffee exporters export millions of coffee bags and we are not monitoring the money coming into the country and whether the payment comes directly through the company base here in Papua New Guinea or kept off shore.

I am saying this because the company that provincial government created –

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Honourable Member for Goroka, I wish to remind you that you cannot walk across in front of a member who has the Floor.

Go ahead, Governor.

**Mr PETER NUMU** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I accept his apology.

A coffee exporting company was created by the Eastern Highlands Provincial Government and an agreement was signed this year. With the export of only two containers, it is expected to bring in US\$162 000 into the country. If we convert it into Papua New Guinea kina, it is about K570 000 and this money goes directly to our people in such tough economy times when Covid-19 is killing us.

We are talking about other sectors but the sector which I call 'green gold' will generate more money. Covid-19 is killing our businesses whilst our land is producing coffee and bringing money coming into the country so we must monitor it.

We must monitor those international coffee exporters and I'm using this company owned by provincial government as an example; whether they pay money directly into the country or off-shore. We measure that with the number of the coffee bags or any other fresh produce or commodities.

**28/08**

We are turning a blind eye and not monitoring all of these and allowing our money to be kept off-shore.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we are at the crossroads now with capitalist and socialist. And the Eastern Highlands Government under my leadership, we are going in the way of socialism.

The people of Eastern Highlands own that company because the Provincial Government saw that there was inequality and injustice done to my people by those who own means of production and access to markets at the expense of my people. So, the Provincial Government cannot sit and relax. We have to intervene for the common good of the people. That is why we created this company and it is owned by the people. We want to access the real markets outside and see whether the people will benefit from it. And yes, it worked out.

We are bringing money into the country with little export and people are now enjoying the price. I don't know about cocoa and copra and whether they are selling monopoly or not. I believe one or two have monopolised it but otherwise, we will make a lot of money through these commodities.

If we do not create a system or a vehicle to grab those money from off-shores into our country, then we are missing out big time.

Sometimes through responsible departments like DIL, with respect to Minister for Agriculture, there are big markets outside and we need to tap into those markets.

So many times, we say the commodity prices are controlled by the global markets. How can we measure global markets? Does the global market only see demand in the European countries or are there other countries as well? We haven't penetrated those markets.

Therefore, some protocols must be signed by NAQIA to open our markets or find markets for us so that we can export our fresh produce and bring in the much-needed money.

For example, nothing has been done for coffee. China requested for millions of coffee bags (green beans) but we haven't signed any protocols to allow for this. Fortunately, we only signed for tuna only and not fresh produce. We have to sign for fresh produce. So, we must set the protocols for fresh produce to bring in money for our country rather than saying, 'my district or province needs money all the time.' We must see how we can bring money in to our country, we must now make decisions. We should not rely only on the Prime Minister all the time. We, as leaders, too must make decisions and take the lead as mandated leaders. The *Organic Law* gives powers to the provincial governments to hold and dispose of properties and make certain decisions.

As I mentioned earlier about coffee --

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** -- Honourable Governor, time for Grievance Debate has lapsed.

Motion -- That the grievances be noted -- agreed to.

### **SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT**

Motion (by **Mr William Samb**) agreed to --

That the Parliament at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 7 September 2021 at 2 p.m..

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion (by **Mr William Samb**) agreed to --

That the Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 1 p.m.