

THIRD DAY

Thursday 18 November 2021

DRAFT HANSARD

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CORRECTIONS TO DAILY DRAFT HANSARD

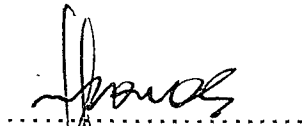
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Corrections should relate only to inaccuracies. New matters may not be introduced.



HARRY MOMOS

Principal Parliamentary Reporter

DAY THREE

Thursday 18 November 2021

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

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

Sitting suspended.

The Speaker again took the Chair at 10.55 a.m, and invited the Member for Rigo, **Honourable Lekwa Gure**, to say Prayers;

‘God our heavenly Father we bow before your holy throne. And this morning as we acknowledge your kingship and lordship of our lives. We thank you for the gift of life that you give us everyday and that you have done so today. We are truly thankful for the many provisions that you provide for us daily. And as the heavens are higher than the earth so are your ways and thoughts are higher than our ways and our thoughts. Therefore, father we ask that you will grant us the desire to seek your mind that we will serve our people with a heart of service and diligence. Let your spirit of truth hover over us in this honourable House today as we go about our government business and discuss issues of national importance. This is our prayer that we bring to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.’

MOTION BY LEAVE

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschhafen-Minister for National Planning and Monitoring)- I ask leave of Parliament to move a motion without notice.

Leave granted

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

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

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent Government Business No:260 being called on forthwith.

02/03

ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS BILL 2021

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Bryan Kramer** and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr BRYAN KRAMER (Madang-Minister for Justice and Attorney) – I move –

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to present to this Honourable House and the people of Papua New Guinea, this important Bill on Electronic Commerce entitled Electronic Transactions Bill 2021.

Mr Speaker, digital technologies are transforming the way goods and services are produced, consumed, delivered or traded globally. In addition, innovation and digitalization has created enabling platform for delivery of basic government services such as health, education, law and order.

Mr Speaker, in the era of electronic commerce and digital economy, to stay competitive in domestic and international markets, government and enterprises are redefining their strategies, business models and policies to accommodate innovation and digitalization.

Mr. Speaker, this rapid transformation from manual paper-based process to electronic data process of the global economy has opened up new growth opportunities in all sectors including for our Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). It is a

powerful enabler for the internationalization of our local businesses, who no longer need a physical, commercial presence to market and sell their products to the world. It has the potential to provide an extraordinary stimulus to the economic growth and trade in this country.

Mr Speaker, e-commerce is becoming a major pillar of Internet and Digital economy which has contributed to the development of trade globally. It is one of the fastest growing segments of global trade, growing from practically zero two decades ago to an estimated value of over 25.3 trillion USD globally in 2015.

Mr Speaker, up to now, PNG had no such legal framework for electronic transactions recognition, which is an important element and pre-condition for the growth of e-commerce and digital economy. Lack of coherent policies and regulations has been one of the obstacles for more investment and growth of ecommerce.

Mr Speaker, the absence of such legislation undermines the idea and principles of non-discrimination against electronic transactions, their legal effect, validity and enforceability. It results in lack of transparency, predictable, legal and regulatory approaches and measures that are business friendly and coherent to facilitate cross-border e-commerce.

Mr Speaker, lack of appropriate legislation further undermines our ability to remain competitive as business has to be conducted faster, at lower costs and to a higher security standard in a rapidly changing and increasing complex global trading environment.

Mr. Speaker, recognising this situation in line with the priority of this government to grow our economy, my ministry assisted key government agencies and development partners, to facilitate this Bill to Parliament. This legislation will ensure transparency and legal predictability, facilitate better connectivity of our local SME into the global market place and further grow our internet and digital economy.

Mr Speaker, the specific objectives of this Legislation are the:

- facilitation of electronic communications by means of reliable electronic records;
- facilitation of electronic commerce, to eliminate barriers to electronic commerce resulting from uncertainties over writing and signature requirements, and to promote the development of the legal and business infrastructure necessary to implement secure electronic commerce;

- facilitation of electronic filing of documents with public agencies, and to support the promotion of efficient delivery by public agencies of services by means of reliable electronic records;
- by application of principles relevant to electronic transactions, minimise the incidence of forged electronic records, intentional and unintentional alteration of records, and fraud in electronic commerce and other electronic transactions;
- help to establish uniformity of rules, regulations and standards regarding the authentication and integrity of electronic records;
- promote public confidence in the integrity and reliability of electronic records and electronic commerce, and foster the development of electronic commerce through the use of electronic signatures to lend authenticity and integrity to correspondence in any electronic medium.

03/03

Mr Speaker, this Bill consists of six Parts, *42 Sections*. The structure allows differentiation between general provisions on electronic transactions, electronic contractual issues, electronic signatures, and electronic transferable records, which follow the UN Model Laws and UN Conventions pertaining to these areas and specific provisions left to the discretion of national jurisdictions.

Mr Speaker, following traditional legal drafting style, Part 1 provides for the preliminaries such as constitutional compliance of the Bill and definitions of terms used. It also defines the scope of application of this law.

Part 2 deals with electronic transactions. It provides for applicable principles, among them are the general principles of freedom of contract and party autonomy, location of the parties and its significance in electronic environment, information requirements, meaning that this Act does not affect information disclosure requirements contained in other legislation. This part also incorporates the principle of prohibition against electronic transactions. It also covers various actions in relation to data messages: admissibility and evidential weight of data messages, retention of data messages, recognition by parties of data messages, attribution of data messages, time and place of dispatch and receipt of data messages, acknowledgement of receipt. All those provisions follow the UN Model Law on Electronic Commerce.

Mr Speaker, Part 3 is specific to electronic contracting, firstly, declaring non-discrimination against electronic means in relation to contracts, and, secondly, underlining specificities of contracts concluded with electronic means.

Part 4 is dedicated to electronic signatures and trust services which sets out principles applicable to electronic signatures and conduct of signatory, service provider and relying party.

Mr Speaker, Part 5 provides for electronic transferrable records. It provides for the legal recognition of electronic transferable records, conditions that make an electronic document to be considered a transferable document or instrument, non-discrimination of foreign electronic transferable records, legal implications pertaining to control of a transferable document or instrument. It also provides the reliability standards for electronic transferable documents and instruments, indication of time and place of electronic transferable records and process for replacement of a transferable document or instrument with an electronic record and vice versa.

Part 6 provides for miscellaneous provisions. It has only one provision that allows for regulations to be made on matters prescribed to give effect to the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill when adopted by this House will create a favourable regulatory eco-system for e-commerce to promote predictability, transparency, security, fair competition and consistency promote development of Information and Communication Technology infrastructure for facilitating cross-border e-commerce, including trade in goods and services, encourage and facilitate greater participation of businesses in global commerce, in particular medium and small enterprises; enhance cooperation between public and private sectors, including on consumer protection; contribute to trade and investment facilitation, supporting the achievement of the Vision 2050, MTDP III, the National Trade Policy 2017-2032 and drive the government agenda to "take back PNG";

Mr Speaker, through this legislation, the Government has laid a vital building block for the development of e-commerce and digital trade and set the foundation for PNG to work toward achieving a stronger, vibrant and economically independent Papua New Guinea through an efficient and competitive domestic market.

Mr Speaker, I must also stress that this Electronic Transactions Bill fits in perfectly with the vision of this Government to "take back PNG" and to make "PNG the Richest Black Christian Nation in the World" by ensuring that our traders and especially our Micro to Small and Medium Enterprises will be able to conduct their transactions under a sound legal and regulatory framework that is enforceable to ensure integrity of the transactions,

security of data and compliance to this act. With the increase in confidence of doing business and making transactions on-line, I anticipate an increase of transactions by our SMEs and an overall boost in the domestic economy in the medium to the long run.

Finally, Mr Speaker, it will be remiss of me not to thank our development partners in particular the European Union and all government agencies and departments who have contributed in providing the technical expertise and financial support to develop this Bill.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me thank you for giving me the opportunity to present this important Bill to this Honourable House and I seek the support of all Members for the passing of this Bill.

With that, I now commend the Electronic Transactions Bill 2021 to this Honourable House.

04/03

Mr DAVIS STEVEN (Esa'ala) - Mr Speaker, I wish to commend the Minister for Justice for bringing this important foundational corner stone legislation in the interests of our country going into the future.

I stand to lend the support of leaders on this side of the House and to bring to the attention of the Honourable House important contribution that has also come through in this Bill from this previous Government leaders, many of them here in this House including the Honourable Minister for Communication and his Department who are working very hard on the Government's e-Government policy and the former Minister for Trade and Investment, Honourable Richard Maru who in his time in 2017 adopted our nation's first ever trade policy.

Mr Speaker, this Bill is the direct result of the Trade Policy. In the Trade Policy we set a foundation as a country to begin to do the necessary ground work in order that we might position our country and especially our SME's in engaging in Commerce and Commerce in the context of what is happening in the country today. Transactions that are electronic are already taking place, we are paying our bills online. We are paying for transactions, whether goods or services online but we did not have such a legislation like this and so this is an important piece of legislation, it's a timely legislation.

Mr Speaker as I speak, I think of our Trade Group that is now in Dubai. This nation has gone through into the expense of sending a team to the World Trade Fair in Dubai proudly showing and showcasing our products and our intention as a Government to

participate in world commerce and regional commerce. We wonder how they will be able to participate if we do not as a national legislature begin to support them and protect them.

Mr Speaker, two days ago the Honourable Minister for Finance went on a very long discussion about Cyber Security. Now we are faced with biosecurity issues in this Pandemic and therefore this Bill is very important, as we try to catch up with the world. We are catching up with the rest of the world.

Mr Speaker, I was personally involved in this legislation and I am heartened that at long last this Bill has arrived in this Honourable House. I want to secure an undertaking from the Minister responsible for the regulations that need to be promulgated. We must not fall into the culture of passing laws without regulations. We passed the *ICAC Act* but there is no regulation, *Pandemic Act* no regulation, now with this *Electronic Transactions Act*, the Attorney General and his staff in DJAG must now work and bring the regulations otherwise our SME's will be waiting forever.

Mr Speaker, there is also a need for this House to pass amendments to the *Evidence Act* and the National Court rules so that electronic transactions can now be recognised and can be proven in Court otherwise, we will have contracts that can never be proven on the basis of electronic transactions. That is missing in this statement and that is why I rise to encourage the Honourable Minister to consider these issues as he goes back to his department to advise them on the way forward. I also want to say that we need now a clear policy driven to draw our domestic ICT industry.

Since the days of Noel Mobihia in the University of Technology about four decades ago when we produced our nation's first graduates of Computer Engineering and software development, our leadership in this country has left a vacuum unattended to. And as I speak today, I recognise the work of the PNGICT Cluster which is a group that represents SME's and entrepreneurs

05/03

They have been trying to get attention from government. I know they will celebrate this legislation today, but to them we owe our responsibility and our duty. I want to see the SOE Minister moving towards a Kumul Tech concept which is something that former State Enterprise Minister, Mr Muthuvel, and I were promoting in order that we might try to support those citizens in this area. We need now to have a clear strategy to develop this particular area in our economy.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Communication and his officers have already worked hard in our e-government policy. There must be some synergy, some collaborations and unionising in how we are approaching this area. Government must go on e-government, e-commerce, e-health, e-education and there must be a clear strategy on investing in communication, whether it is satellite or it is in improving our fiber optics capability.

But right now, Mr Speaker, as I speak, the fiber optic that was invested under the Honourable Peter O'Neill government seems to be hijacked by certain individual companies within the group of SOEs in the intention of reaching the message of our country into the schools and businesses in the rural areas. Right now, they put so many road blocks that is almost impossible. I don't know when, maybe in the next century, the Esa'ala people will get high quality internet coverage on our shores.

Mr Speaker, this is one legislation that really needs to be supported but not just a support, more work needs to be done. Those ministers responsible in associated areas like education and commerce must now work together because Covid-19 has caused us to look downwards inwardly. We are troubled and worried but the government must look forward. We must look forward to the future. How do we defeat Covid-19 in the post Covid-19 era?

Mr Speaker, I'm glad that right now some nations are already planning their future post for Covid-19. For example, Norway is now creating global conferences. Singapore, for instance, is inviting regional leaders to attend conferences where they will focus on rebuilding industry and post Covid. This is a legislation that can provide the basis on which us as a nation and our brothers and sisters in the Pacific region or even in the Melanesian solidarity group or MSG group or spearhead group to start working on our trade facilitation.

So, Mr Speaker, I commend this Bill and lend my support.

Thank you.

Mr DON POLYE (Kandep) – Thank you, Mr Speaker. In support of the Minister and of the Marape government, I would like to also join the debate on this Bill by recapping some issues.

Mr Speaker, if you look at the trend of the world economy and cash flow of the financial system over the last ten years, the new norm that we talk about today has started ten years ago. The new norm is the digital economy. The e-commerce or e-business is a competition now. The competition now is on how smart or competent the country and its people can become fluent in doing online business through internet. Even with the current new norm, we have experienced business houses shutting down and locking people down

at their homes which has isolated them from doing business. But what has become very strong is doing e-business or e-commerce. Therefore, this Bill is very innovative and it moves in the right direction and I support the points made by the Shadow Attorney General on the other side. We have to see this as one of the most important Bills we have passed that encompasses many other areas as well.

Globalization brings the world so close together and integrated trade so close to your doorsteps. What makes it closer? It is because of the changes that have taken place in technology over the past ten years.

06/03

Because of these rapid changes, it has not given a chance to governments to make laws in conjunction with changing technology over this period of time. We have to adapt and change with time and this Bill exactly leads the way to that.

Those who follow integrated trade and how technology is becoming so useful today are becoming successful in their endeavours.

Mr Speaker, the other issue I want to raise is the highway of information and the need for easy internet access in this country.

In Kandep, I use B-Mobile but many a times there is no connecting. My people of Kandep will miss these e-business opportunities because of the lack of network coverage. It's the same in Pomio, Oksapmin, et cetera, but where there is Digicel Network it connects. We really have a huge dilemma and this Bill will not work effectively if the people don't have a broad highway for internet transmission of this information that will grow commerce, trade legislation and our economy.

Mr Speaker, another issue that we should consider and look into is the integrated government system. Our public service down to the grassroots level are completely oblivious as to what transpires in Parliament. There is no proper channel of information because lack of TV coverage in remote places and we also lack a system that manages how we disseminate information to our rural people down at the district level. Our district administration has that huge responsibility to making sure information is made available to the people.

If we have a legislated integrated system of governance to disseminate information, it will add value to such legislation as this.

• A matter we should look at in accompanying this legislation is the need for financial inclusion of our people. I think the Bank of PNG has a program that trains people to be included in the financial development of the country. For instance, how to apply this Bill to their businesses, what are the pros and cons of this Bill. People out there are making money but they are not in the banking system.

We have to find ways to include our people financially through laws like this.

Mr Speaker, we also have to consider the local capital market. We keep going outside of our country to raise money. But we have to have a market in PNG that gives us the money and they must be liquidated here. We must have banks here. Now, ANZ has given up all its micro retail banking and have embarked on corporate banking services and that is not good news for us. We see other Banks like Westpac Bank wanting to sell to other buyers. That is not good news at all. We should be seeing banks wanting to do business in PNG and establishing themselves here so there is a bigger banking institution network and capacity here to enhance financial inclusion of our people. These Banking institutions are the institutions that drive such policy.

Mr Speaker, the other point I would like to raise is integral human development. Our students from the elementary up to the tertiary level must be encouraged to undertake e-business and e-commerce because it requires a lot of skills, technical, economic, business finance knowledge et cetera. Today knowledge is broader and people are learning everything. People are market skilled this days. You can work 10 different jobs in 24 hours. Consultants are doing that. People are getting more affluent in business and becoming multi-skilled.

07/03

Now people are learning everything because of the information that is available right there on their fingertips.

Papua New Guinea students, that is why we are stuck. We must not fear, but we must have an affluent society that is educated enough to be literate enough to apply and use this knowledge in business and compete with the rest of the world.

We should not be only preparing Papua New Guineans to succeed in the villages or to win the National Elections. No! We should not only encourage them to compete in PNG. Let us make them become competitive in the international global business community; applying the use of internet, e-business and e-commerce economy.

The new norm today is not Covid-19, it is e-business. Covid-19 is pushing everyone to using e-business. If you are locked at your home, you have to go online to order your food and other products.

See how the world is going? People are now talking about electric vehicles. They have given up on all these hydrochloric Carbon emitting sources of energy. They are going towards Green Energy (Clean Energy) now and electric vehicles.

So, we need to educate our people and that must be the priority of any government, but of this Parliament. When the people are not educated or skilled, the policies that we are creating here in Parliament will not be understood by our people because of their level of knowledge.

Mr Speaker, finally, all these is depending on food, economic management and cash-flow management of this country. We hear time and time again that we are running short of this and that, etcetera. It all depends on prudent economic management.

We must now change because of the new norm impacting this economy. Covid-19 has led us to manage the economy better. We must identify the right areas and be able to apply or manage such as merging human resource development with e-commerce and innovative strategies. We must focus in financing those areas.

We also have many other areas to spend. In Kandep, I want to do many things there but what are the priorities? Kandep does not manage the rest of Papua New Guinea. What are the priorities that we will do together as a Parliament and a Government together with the Opposition and manage the economy going forward and achieve the dreams we have before us?

It all depends on how well we manage ourselves. It is not the old ways anymore, Mr Speaker. It is now the new way. What is the new way? It is the e-commerce way. This is an economic way. We have to encourage our people to become skilful; not just at one skill but multi-skilled. We must guide and train them so that whatever regulations or policies that we make here on this Floor will be of value to the people and Papua New Guinea will grow.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

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

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

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Leave granted to move the third reading forthwith.

Motion (by **Mr Bryan Kramer**) proposed –

That the Bill be now read a third time.

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

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

08/03

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

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

AYES – 77

NOES – 0

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

Bill read a third time.

10/03

QUESTIONS

Update on Marine Parks and Processing Plant- Madang

Mr RICHARD MARU – Thank you, Mr Speaker, my question this morning is directed to the Minister for Fisheries, but before I ask my question let me start by commending the Marape Government for the recently launched NFA Corporate Plan and I noted with interest that one of the major features of the plan is the intention to revive the marine park in Madang -the PMIZ project and have it commercialized under NFA and build processing facilities so we can finally process 100 per cent of our catch in the country.

Currently 70 per cent of all our catch are taken off shore to countries like the Philippines where they are processed. This causes us to lose 10,000 new jobs. The Philippines has now secured special market access to the European Union markets, which means; they are now competing with Papua New Guinea who has been enjoying the special market access through the interim partnership agreement we have with the European Union. So, our fish are exported there free of duty, this is the reason behind the growth of the industry in our country.

So, the fish caught in our waters by fishing boats from Philippines are taken to their country, cleaned up and canned under their county brand and shipped to the European markets as a product of Philippines, when it is actually fish from PNG waters-our fish. We are losing 10,000 or more new jobs. And NFA raises about K500 million which comes into the compass of the National Government and it is through the fees that we mainly charge. This industry is worth over K1.2 – K1.5 million if we are able to process all the fish from our waters.

Mr Speaker, this Government must be highly commended for this decision and my questions to the Minister are;

- 1) Can you give us a time frame as to when the work will start?
- 2) Is the funding being secured?
- 3) When do we see action?

This is because we all support that initiative and we want to see the marine park built with one or two new canneries and we have the processing capacity to process all our fish in the country, so that what is caught in our waters is not processed overseas and is sent to markets to compete with us yet again.

It is one of the best decisions, we support you. But can you tell the people of Papua New Guinea and this Parliament when this is going to happen under your new plan.

Dr LINO TOM - I would like to thank the Member for Yangoru-Sausia. These are very important questions that need to be answered on the Floor of Parliament this morning. I need some time to retrieve some background information on the questions being raised. I agree with him but in terms of the number of jobs being lost, I want to give you an example of the RD Tuna cannery in Madang. It employs 13,000 people. This is just one cannery so if we look at the PMIZ the projected number of people that would be employed if the PMIZ comes into fruition would be about 40,000 people and that is the number of new jobs that we are looking at.

And he made mention that 70 per cent of our fish are taken overseas. This is correct and currently we are processing only 30 per cent of the fish being caught in our waters. Of the 30 per cent caught in our waters, this equates to an income of about US\$292, 455 million. If you look at that; it is about over K1.2 billion worth of money that this industry is generating. In terms of taxes, it is difficult for us to actually know how much of that is paid as tax because of the confidentiality clauses in the tax regime. I have tried for a while to get a figure out of IRC but I have not succeeded.

In relation to the beche-de-mer exports, in good years we probably export up to K110 million worth but last year's export range was around K50 million. That is money going directly to the pockets of ordinary Papua New Guineans.

11/03

Mr Speaker, we are good to go but the only problem we have is funding. Funding is something that we must have to start off this good project and as leaders in this House, we also have our local needs that seems to be adding more space in the fiscal budget and it is quite difficult for us to build this transforming infrastructure.

Let me give you an idea of what we are missing out on. Thailand, a country which has no Tuna at all, is now the world tuna capital. Now, how is that possible? Because some smart leader decided 30 years ago to invest in capital development. They invested in enabling infrastructures. It is quite cheap to process one metric ton of tuna in Thailand than it is in this country.

In order to encourage industries to be established here, the former government had to introduce a production rebate so that we pay the price difference in processing one metric ton of tuna. Now that we equate the price difference between us doing business and Thailand which is the gold standards, it equates to about K120 million every year, given freely to the industry. This is the reason why we have to build PMIZ.

PMIZ is very important because it is basically an economic zone for fisheries. It provides all the infrastructure necessary to cut down the costs of utility so that we can compete with countries like Thailand who have no fish at all. PNG has 37 per cent of the world's tuna and together with our neighboring countries including Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and other Pacific Island countries we have about 67 per cent of the world's tuna.

Now, if we can bring all these fish here to our canneries into the Special Economic Zone to do that business here than we will be looking at generating K2 billion every year, in terms of direct revenue into this country. That is the reason why PMIZ is an important project that needs to get off the ground as soon as possible

There are varying opinions from other developing partners like World Bank who said that in the next few years our fish will migrate to the eastern part of the globe and that means that we will no longer have this resource to run our PMIZ. But we have to understand that if we have the enabling infrastructure in this country to compete with others like Thailand, we can still conduct business because the fish will still be in the water of the smaller Pacific Island countries.

In 1985, the PNA Group of Companies, which actually control the World's Tuna came up with a policy called the Tuna Domestication. This policy was made because smaller Pacific island countries did not have the capacity to build infrastructure. So, basically, the Tuna Domestication Policy is something this country needs to look into. Now, what this means is that when PMIZ comes onboard, those smaller countries will be given an opportunity to process their tuna here and we will be in control of 80 per cent of the world's tuna. It could make us essentially the world's tuna capital.

This was the plan we launched but what it needs now is the source, the finances towards that program. We have to think smart and we can no longer depend on the extractive industries because when they all run out, fisheries will still remain. Any smart government will invest in that program.

So, PMIZ is there and from initial feasibility studies done, it is one of the highly bastardised program in the government where we are going from one department to another with nothing on the ground.

12/03

Madang was chosen because fishing activity happens a lot along the Bismarck area in terms of tuna so, this is the space that we want to go in now.

I thank the good leader NFA has launched its 10-year strategic plan and feasibility studies have been done, we are ready to go but need funding. Many times, we focus on building roads and the other projects for today's benefit but there is no indirect return from the investment. It is about time we make strong decisions

At the government level, we must make strong decisions and invest in this sector. When tuna run out, it is the Coastal Fisheries that will come on board. Things like sea cucumber, we can't even feed the entire population of China, we will properly feed up to 1000 people, if the whole country goes into sea cucumber.

Now we can't do all those things, we have to build up on our strength and the strength is tuna. We have abundance of tuna and let's use revenue that's coming from tuna and invest in those infrastructures that are necessary.

There was a good decision made by previous government for creating an infrastructure fund.

Sir Puka Temu – Point of Order! Mr Speaker, we are all convinced about the importance of this plan that the government launched with a lot of fanfare but the simple question asked is when will it commence.

He has admitted that the government is not providing the funding, so there's no need for the minister to continue.

Mr SPEAKER – The honourable Member for Abau, your Point of Order is out of Order because the Minister is answering the question and clearing some doubts as well.

Mr LINO TOM – Thank you, I will finish shortly and thanks for cautioning me. We are all on this Floor of Parliament and fighting for a space in the budget. I am pretty sure, a lot of you after the Budget is passed, will look into it to see if your projects are actually reflected.

We are not even talking about how to generate the revenue. It's an important issue, sometimes we must discuss it.

Anyway, the Prime Minister has given assurance that we will start next year. The NFA has actually promised internal revenue to put aside some money to do feasibility studies and designs.

So, let me thank the Marape Government for giving the opportunity to lead a sector which I have no experience in but it is an exciting sector that needs to grow.

Madang-Baiyer Road Progress.Update

Mr JONNY ALONK – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I wish to direct my question to the Minister for Defence but since he is not here, I redirect it to Prime Minister.

Before I ask the question, I'll like to take this time and on behalf of the people of Middle-Ramu Electorate, thank and acknowledge the visits of the Minister for Higher Education Science & Technology and Minister for Sports.

They have taken their precious time to visit my district and launched the soccer team who will partake in the PNG National Soccer League (NSL). I really appreciate it. Thank you so much.

My question is in regards to the Madang-Baiyer Road. Construction works started in 2008 by PNGDF Engineering Battalion of Lae. They have commenced the work from Western Highlands towards Jimi river and from Madang the works stopped at Ramu river.

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They have worked for so many years but there is no progress. I stand here to talk about the program that the PNGDF is running. Once a project like this is running, at least we must have a stakeholder meeting to find out how far the project has come. How many kilometers they have covered, are they still working, all these things must be explained so that we know where we are going. As far as this Government is concerned this is one of the priority roads in the Momase and Highlands.

My question is when are they going to conduct a stakeholders' meeting, so that we know the direction that we are moving to. They have done two stakeholder meetings in the Western Highlands in 2009 and 2010 and in Madang in 2010 and 2011. So up till now there has not been any stakeholders meeting conducted. Therefore, we would like to know when they will conduct the meeting so we are able to know the progress of the project. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr JAMES MARAPE (Tari-Pori–Prime Minister) – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like thank the Member for Middle Ramu and Vice Minister for the question about a very important road that should unlock that part of our country from Madang pass Transgogol valley, Ramu River and into Usino Bundi right up to Middle Ramu and to Baiyer Ruti. It's an important track, I was there. I flew over it in my last visit to that part of our country and I saw the work that the Defence Force did and I commend the Defence Force Engineering Battallion who are present in some of the remotest areas. One of which

is the road to Kabwum, the commitment that was made was pumped out from the Lae to Finchhafen. And hopefully it goes to Indagen to Kabwum

But coming back to this road, the leader asked for a stakeholders meeting. I would like to inform him that we can organize a meeting on Monday. He can come to my office, here in Parliament and we can meet with PNGDF Secretary and the Commander to have an update on what is happening. Funds were allocated in last year and this year's budget for the Defence to keep working on these roads and we will continue to allocate funds to ensure that these roads are completed. There's also an allocation by Indian Exim Bank that was secured by the last Government but has been outstanding for some time. We are to see if that funding can be drawn down and that road be worked upon. It's a very important missing link that could unlock central Highlands straight to Madang to the port straight to the PMIZ and the coastal areas.

Mr Speaker in reply to his question. I give assurance to the Member and advise him that he can come to my office on Monday at 10 a.m. to go through the issues concerning Middle Ramu, Ramu – Madang – Mt Hagen Road. Thank you, very much

Mr SPEAKER – Thank you. Honorable Members, before the Chair continues to entertain your questions, if I heard correctly, did a member blow a whistle? or was that a mobile phone? If I heard correctly, please put your phones on silent when in the Chamber.

Honorable Governor for Oro, you may now ask your question.

Mr GARY JUFFA – Thank you Mr Speaker. My series of questions are directed to the Minister for Health.

The first question is in relation to an outstanding issue, the Pills and Regulations. Can the minister advise when these regulations will be passed, its been ten years and long overdue? My second question is in regards to a NGO that has been conducting census in six provinces in the country.

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It seems the NGO 'Susu Mama' will soon shut down. They sent an urgent letter to me and I forwarded the letter to the Minister through *WhatsApp*, of which, I already conversed with. I would like to thank you for your quick response and I commend you for that. However, can you advise us on how the Department of Health and the Government will assist this very important NGO that provides very important services to our mothers

especially in our rural and low-income areas. This NGO provided vital services to our mothers.

I would like to inform us that 80 per cent funding for this NGO comes from Australian Government. We used to fund 10 per cent only. However, I would like to say that in line with our Government's policy on supporting important NGOs like this who are involved in health and education. Can the Government increase their percentage beyond 10 per cent? Now that this NGO is at the brink of shutting down, can the Health Minister inform us what he will do to assist this very important NGO in our country?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr JELTA WONG – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the Governor for Oro, honourable Garry Juffa, for his series of questions. The first question on PHA regulations are on track. It is with the State Solicitor's office before it comes back to my department so we can take it to NEC for approval. There were some regulations that were out of date that we had to update and it has gone through the process.

With the Susu Mamas, I heard from the honourable Governor on their status. It is a very important entity and foundation of the Health Department. It reaches places where NDoH cannot reach so I have spoken to the relevant foreign partners as well as the Secretary to furnish a report on how we can fast track and move forward in addressing the issues that we have with the Susu Mama. I will ensure that we have an outcome of this by the end of next week because Susu Mama is a foundation that a lot of us subscribe to and support. It would be a sad day if we don't help this institution.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr BELDEN NAMA – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to direct my question to the Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, my question is in relation to the recently signed gold refinery and mint project between the Independent State of Papua New Guinea and Refinery Holding PTE, Singapore.

Mr Speaker, whilst I appreciate the good intention by the Prime Minister and his Government to build a gold refinery and mint project in Papua New Guinea. I believe this agreement, as I see it, does not fall within the policy that the Prime Minister is driving to take back Papua New Guinea.

Mr Speaker, I say this because this particular agreement has attracted a lot of concerns by our citizens, the industry players in the country including the Chamber of Mines.

Mr Speaker, from the agreement as I see it, the project agreement involves three very important projects and three different and distinct businesses. They are the gold Refinery, the gold mint and the gold bank. There is also an agreement for gold polish and the gold polish's primary responsibility would be to enforce and enact as an authority for this gold refinery and mint project in our country.

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Mr Speaker, before I go into my series of questions, I want to clarify that gold is an important strategic national asset.

My questions are as follows;

(1) Can the Prime Minister give us in detail and with clarity the terms of this agreement and how do we stand to benefit as a country?

(2) Can the Prime Minister inform this Parliament who are the proponents and promoters of this project?

(3) Can the Prime Minister inform this Parliament and the people of our country whether or not his government did in any form conduct due diligence on a company registered in Singapore before he executed that agreement?

(4) While we all know gold is a national strategic asset, did the Prime Minister and his government give first right of refusal to the Independent State of Papua New Guinea through its State-owned company, Kumul Minerals Holdings, to build and operate the gold refinery, gold mill and gold bank in Papua New Guinea? If not, then why not?

(5) Alternatively, did the Prime Minister and his government approach existing mine companies operating in Papua New Guinea and also our citizens who are also involved in buying and selling gold and discussed with them the option to participate in the gold refinery and gold mill project in our country?

(6) Did the Prime Minister and his government consider putting this all-important national strategic asset project on open tender which would have attracted investors with vast experience of running and operating a metal refinery in our country?

(7) Why the monopoly or the exclusivity for 75 years with an option for another 25 years? We are giving our country away and it is contrary to the policy that the Prime

Minister preaches on the Floor of Parliament and in public podiums of 'Take Back PNG'. We are instead giving away our country.

(8) Why was the project agreement signed in the absence of the legislation of a gold refinery and mill in PNG?

Mr Speaker, I understand that that legislation is going to come to the Floor of Parliament. The challenge is on every Member of this Parliament to either support it and pass it or go against it because as I say, we are giving our country for 100 years, that would be like two lifetimes.

(9) I want to put the Prime Minister and his government and the so-called investor, Refinery Holdings PTE Limited Singapore, and this Honourable Parliament and the people of our beautiful country on notice, that I have instructed my lawyers to seek a judicial review on this particular project agreement in the interest of our country.

I also want to put on notice the proponents of this gold refinery project and –

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Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Opposition Leader, ask your question.

Mr BELDEN NAMAH – Mr Speaker, while we appreciate this project, why did the Prime Minister and his government give exclusivity to a foreign company an important strategic national asset?

The Prime Minister needs to explain to our people, thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the question raised by the Opposition Leader. It is a very important question.

That is why the Opposition exists to ensure that our government policies and programs are debated and we assess them in a positive context. If there are deficiencies in what we are doing, we rectify and try to fix them. Therefore, I appreciate the question by the Opposition Leader.

Secondly, the issue on the gold refinery and minting project that we want to embark upon; as consistent with the statement made earlier by the Fisheries Minister our Government, differing from past governments, are in the business of adding value to our resources in the country going forward.

Regarding the fees, we all have heard the statistics on fees. Too much money is going out and we still do not know how much we are receiving. Now we know the fees we are making and are focussed.

As the Minister has stated, PMIZ under the Somare Government was not effective due to lack of focus in it. Also, the O'Neill-led Government focussed too much on borrowing and less on investment on the economic sector.

And so, we are making a concerted effort for all our fishing catches. We will no longer export it but we'll process it here in the country. That is the step we are working towards. The same applies with the Forest Industry.

Gold also will go through the same process like the Fishing and Forest industries. Gold is ranked very high and is very sensitive. We are fearing to move into that space since 1920 or in fact in the 1800's, as someone was telling me, gold was harvested in the Milne Bay waters. Then in 1920's, gold was harvested in Wau-Bulolo and continued into Panguna Mine where copper was also harvested. Issues arose in Panguna Mine and as a result the crisis has made one part of our country to break away. Gold mining continued with opening Porgera and OK Tedi. Lihir Gold Mine, the fourth largest mine, operated without paying corporate tax, which was not declared yet. They were working under laws.

The former Prime Minister is humbling himself like a small girl on the other side of the Floor. The value of exports that were made in his term as Prime Minister were unknown. The Treasurer does not know exactly how much gold was exported. No one here knows how much.

Mr Peter O'Neill – Point of Order! Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister should focus on answering the specific questions that the Honourable Opposition Leader has asked.

If he wants to divert from that, he should provide facts. When he is accusing Lihir of not paying taxes, he should be very careful. Check your records because they have paid hundreds of millions of Kina to the State of Papua New Guinea.

Do not undermine the value of investors in this country. They are paying your taxes and your salary.

Mr Speaker, give them the due respect that they deserve. Stop coming around here with con deals that have no value to this nation.

Answer the question, thank you, Mr Speaker.

• **Mr SPEAKER** – Honourable Member for Ialibu-Pangia, your Point of Order is very clear.

Let me remind all honourable members that before you raise your Point of Order, the Chair has to recognise you.

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Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Speaker.

If the former Prime Minister can sit down and listen instead of mumbling and making unnecessary noise. There are some things we are trying to correct. The past governments were not willing to step up out to unknown frontiers stat.

Frontiers such as earning more money from resources in the downstream sector, downstream all our resources in the country; that is how we move forward. And about gold, I appreciate the question asked by the Opposition Leader, he means well from where he is asking. This is a big step we are trying to take

I give assurance to the Opposition Leader if he could divert his question formally to me so then we can reply in detail. Later today, there will be a presentation on this matter and if the Gold Refinery Holdings deal is signed outside of national interest then we don't know the proponent to this. In fact, they have been proposing back and forth for the last eight or nine years. The former Prime Minister would be clear about this company because they have been going back and forth seeking 99-year lease exclusively.

My instructions were clearly stated to the state and SNT that vetted the submission, there will be no 99-year lease. It must be based on a 50-50 arrangement, if not I pushed for 51 in fact, meaning majority must be owned by the State of Papua New Guinea. You must know that we did not inject any funds into this project. However, if you are qualified then you can link this gold business with London Bullion, Market Association as it is interested in the benchmark of the gold business. This is the first step in that direction. The signing of the deal does not make us partners, no it does not. This is just like the gas first, second and third agreement where we have to check until the final product is good for the country, including no harm to existing mine and alluvial mine operators in our country.

I am not someone ignorant of how these things work. I am a landowner too, my land has a lot of resources in Mt Kare and Porgera Gold Mine. We will not sell our country's birth right and we don't know about this proponent too. As we advance to the

next phase, if it is a deal not in the interest of our country then it will not go ahead and I welcome the Opposition leader to the presentation we will be attending today.

The agreement we signed will be given to everyone to assess for your recommendation. If it is not beneficial for the country, then we will correct it; this isn't the Ten Commandments.

Mr Speaker, my interest as the Prime Minister is to ensure we add value to our resources in our country and gold is the greatest resource we have in our country. For how long can we export without knowing? Ask the former prime ministers and treasurers if they know how much gold; Porgera and Panguna have produced for us? No, we have not been accountable to our people for the resources we have in our country. You have to accept the status quo; they are paying tax. Of course they are paying their employees income tax, like Lihir, and also paying their GST too, but what about corporate tax? So we are stepping into a frontier as a gold-producing nation to own something that we could truly earn. Refinery Holdings is one of the proponents. The National Gold Corporation is a PNG company and Papua New Guinea will not invest and this is good advice because what if we auctioned the proposal.

Mr Speaker, gold is exclusive so to maintain the status quo, they are fighting very hard for us not to advance to that stage. So, the intention is good, we will refine it. My Government is different from former governments who did not want to step into the area of adding value into our resources for our country.

We have fish, gold, oil and everything and yet we don't want to process it, we only want to export only. So, the gold business is simple, you bring the gold to the factory for processing. Mt Kare and Porgera can bring gold to us for processing.

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It is like a processing factory for our gold. We want to know how much gold is produced in our country. There will be no stealing of gold or any monkey business with our gold. If our economy has enough money and we want to retain gold in bullions then by all means, we must. Our thinking and concept are right and in order but the mechanics must not affect the existing industry.

I will be meeting our mining companies at 1 pm today with all these issues. If business will add value to our alluvial miners, then we will allow it to go to the next phase.

We have started the process and discussions. We are stepping on the heads of people who have been making super profits on our gold industry for a very long time.

Mr Speaker, the intention of having a gold refinery will take place. If not by me but by my generation of leaders but I embrace the recommendation that is put forward through this question. We will refine it properly so that we don't compromise the existing industry but rather we add value to it. If we prove that they are not competent then we will not bow down to them. They are just another proponent that has been running around in our government circle. Former ministers and governments know exactly how we dealt with them. They already had the concept and we are giving them the opportunity as we advance into the next stage. If they are not confident and do not have the expertise; and most importantly they do not lead to the London Bullion Market Association which is the global regulator of the gold industry, then we will refine it better to make our intention to process gold in our country known.

I look forward to consulting all stakeholders; the alluvial miners and those in the industry and those of you who have important ideas. Please come forward as this is not a private matter. It is a public matter of interest and let us all embrace this thought about processing our gold in our country. If we cannot do it this time around then I do not think we can ever do it any other time. We must have the ability to believe in ourselves.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER – I have already invited the Honourable Governor of West New Britain to ask his supplementary question.

The *Standing Order* states that the Chair has the discretion to call on any member to ask their supplementary question.

Mr SASINDRAN –MUTHUVEL – Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister for Inter-Government Relations and I also would like the Prime Minister to take note.

Mr Speaker, we all know the Electoral Boundaries Commission Team were sent out to the provinces and district more than three to four times to collect data. This has brought false hope to my people that there is going to be an additional electorate added before the 2022 Election.

Can the Minister, clarify if the Electoral Boundaries Commission Report will be brought to Parliament for debate in this term?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr PILA NININGI – Thank you, Governor for West New Britain Province for this question. This is a very important question and it really is for the Prime Minister to answer but the question is directed to me.

I understand that the Electoral Boundaries Commission is ready and hopefully next week or the week after they will present the report and we can debate it.

Thank you.

Mr RICHARD MASERE – Thank you, Mr Speaker, for recognising the people of Ijivitari. Mr question ins directed to the Prime Minister and I would like the Minister for Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology to take note.

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Mr Speaker, I was part of a delegation that accompanied our Prime Minister, Honourable James Marape, to the United Nations General Assembly in New York. And then to Houston, Texas, where we witnessed the signing of the Heads of Agreement with ExxonMobil. It was important for the Prime Minister to set the framework in place to progress the next stage of the negotiation for the signing of the multi-billion US dollar Papuan LNG and the P'nyang LNG projects.

Mr Speaker, it is so important that we progress many of these projects from just talking and negotiating platforms to the construction phases due to the fact that developed nations who are our potential customers are now seriously looking at acting against the global climate crisis by reducing the emission level and looking at cleaner, greener and blue energy sources as the solution for the future.

What this ultimately indicates is that some of our resources in our backyard, like gold and gas, will become obsolete in the future and our economic 101 will be lost. And whilst some of these synergies are taking place on the world stage; Covid-19 continues to significantly impact on many smaller volatile economies. Businesses are cutting back on staff level and they are even delaying recruitment, closing smaller branches and non-profit divisions; and cutting out middle agencies in order to save money.

Mr Speaker, as a result, many of our citizens are without jobs and are struggling to make ends meet. The question is; are there any solutions? The short answer is yes. The Papua LNG and P'nyang LNG projects will fix these for us. If we learnt anything from the

2010 PNG LNG project; over 21, 000 employment opportunities were created during the construction phase of this project.

At its peak 12,800 foreign workers were recruited and about 4,800 were recruited, a vast difference between foreign and local workers due to lack of skilled work force in Papua New Guinea.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Member, you are reading a statement. Can you ask your question?

Mr RICHARD MASERE – Thank you, I am about to ask my question. While talking to a few training institutions; we have been told that we do not have the right training modules available in both the government and private run institutions to produce skilled and qualified workforce. To be better placed for the coming project, the Department of Higher Education Science Research and Technology must develop policies, standards and curriculum and make it available to both the government and private run institutions around the country; so, they can train and develop skilled workers in preparation for this project. I am only estimating that between 10,000 and 15,000 jobs could be created and 99 per cent of our citizens must be ready to be employed in these jobs. It is also important that as MPs we must be prepared and must be able to train our district people; especially our young people to be able to get these jobs.

Mr Belden Namah – Point of Order! He has been told not to read the statement and he is still reading a statement. Can he just get to his questions please?

Papua LNG Project Agreement

Mr RICHARD MASERE – My questions are;

(1) Can the Prime Minister give an indication of the timeline when the Papua LNG Gas Project Agreement will be signed?

(2) When can we expect the construction phase of this project to commence?

(3) Will the Papua LNG and P'nyang LNG run concurrently or independently?

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(4) How much in US dollars will be injected directly into the economy during the construction phase of the Papua LNG project?

- (5) How many jobs will be created by these projects when it starts; can we expect the same number of workers as the PNG LNG project in 2010?

(6) Can ExxonMobil guarantee this government that the first choice of employment will be given to Papua New Guineans?

(7) Is the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology ready to produce skilled workers and are the policy standards and curriculum available to be given to both the private and public institutions?

(8) If not, then when will these policies, standards and curriculums be made available?

Mr JAMES MARAPE –Mr Speaker, I thank the Member for Ijivitari for his series of questions. I was pleased as he was able to send me a copy of his questions in advance today. He has asked some important questions.

The project has been signed already and we are now into the project proponents; the pre-feed and feed phase. The Deputy Prime Minister, Honourable Sam Basil, and a team visited Total in Paris specifically to find out the timeline of the project. They have given an indication that they are combining pre-FEED and FEED and it should be completed by the later part of 2023 or mid-2024 and when FEED is completed the project is good to go now.

Based on the front-end engineering design of the project such as the project proponents and mobilising the capital, we will be to fully understand the size and the scope of the project. This then will enable us to measure the construction timeline and also labour personnel to be deployed.

Looking back at what happened in the PNG LNG, it took about four years of construction. There was up to almost 10,000 both local and international workers involved in the construction phase of the project. PNG LNG is initially a 6.6 TCF of gas project, Papua LNG is 6.2. Simply put, it is a two-train project in PNG LNG and another two-train in the Papua LNG. Because Papua LNG is sourced from the Gulf of Papua, it is closer to the refinery and the cost would be a bit less than PNG LNG in my view.

The project will commence around 2026 and as for the P'nyang project, it is not yet off the ground. We have signed the Heads of Agreement and we are now into the next level of agreement. This is to ensure that our legal provisions are in order and the project is okay and we are within the law and the project moves. The HoA was executed and now the state negotiating team is working to ensure the Gas Agreement is delivered to the expectations

that we want. If there is a sequence, probably Papua LNG will be completed before the P'nyang LNG commences. And if these two projects are synergized properly you would have construction activities in our country running for almost eight years.

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So, if it starts in 2024, we'll do FID and construction will begin in 2024 or 2025. You would expect our country to have construction activities running all the way to 2030 linking Papua LNG and P'nyang into the system.

With P'nyang we are still going through the negotiation process. Discussions have not ended yet and the next phase is that we'll be engaging with the Western Provincial Government, the leaders and landowners of the area where the resource sits. What we want to do is synergise both Papua and P'nyang.

During construction phase, we will have around 10 000 to 20 000 people engaged in the construction. I have told ExxonMobil and Total that they must recruit Papua New Guinean workforce in these projects. Both companies have given their full support and indication that we must engage Papua New Guineans to work. Covid restrictions aside, it adds value to ensure that we have 5 000 to 20 000 Papua New Guineans trained to work in the construction. I said I do not want any more Bangladeshi with respect to them, Filipinos, with respect to them, and other outsiders coming in to work in the construction. Papua New Guineans must be given that opportunity.

It comes to the gist of your question, whether we are prepared to use training facilities to ensure our workmen and work women are trained. We've already signalled Port Moresby Technical College, Lae Technical College, Mt Hagen Technical College, Goroka Technical College and Madang Technical College; five technical colleges to see how best we can ramp up training workmen and women. We have about two to three years left before actual construction starts. I have requested ExxonMobil and Total to tell us exactly what sort of technical expertise they need so we could train them up quickly, especially the helping hands. Not the skills needed for the bigger work but those who could associate themselves with the construction phase.

We want Papua New Guineans to be at work so this year we are looking into ensuring that our five technical schools are given some support to ensure they are prepared to work with those two companies. And hopefully, we can secure employment to an additional five to ten thousand workforce.

This is our intention and we are getting good support from both ExxonMobil and Total and we are looking forward to ensuring that Papua New Guineans are trained to work in the construction phase.

One of your questions was how many jobs it will create, well, as I said, possibly up to 10 000 but I don't have any clear indication as yet. But whatever it is, where we could train Papua New Guineans, we'll train them.

Your fourth question was how much US dollars will be put directly in to our economy during the construction phase. Well, history has pointed to us through the PNG LNG Project that it has increased our economy from a K40 billion economy to an K80 billion economy in 2014. That's at the back of the two-train LNG.

Papua LNG will deliver us another two-train and P'nyang LNG, whatever shape it takes will add life to this.

If you look at PNG LNG as an example of an increase from a K40 billion size in our economy, well Papua LNG and P'nyang can also have that kind of influence in our economy.

**AUDITOR-GENERAL OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA –
REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS OF THE APEC PAPUA NEW GUINEA 2018
COORDINATION AUTHORITY FOR THE YEARS 2015-2019 –
MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF THE PAPER**

Mr SPEAKER – I present the following paper pursuant to statute:

*Auditor General of Papua New Guinea –
Report on the Accounts of the 2018 Coordination Authority 2015-2019.*

Motion (by **Mr Aiye Tambua**) agreed to –

That the Parliament take note of the paper and the report be referred to the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts.

**AUDITOR GENERAL OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA –
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON THE PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF
GAZELLE DISTRICT SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (DSIP)
FOR THE YEARS 2007-2016 – MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF PAPER**

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, pursuant to the statute, I present the report of the Auditor-General on the performance audit of Gazelle District Service Improvement Program (DSIP) for the years 2007-2016

Motion (by **Mr Aiye Tambua**) agreed to –

That the Parliament take note of the Paper and the Report be referred to the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts

**AUDITOR GENERAL OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA –
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON THE PERFORMANCE AUDIT
ON TUITION FEE FREE POLICY, 2012-2028 –
MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF PAPER**

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, pursuant to statute, I present the report of the Auditor General on the performance audit on Tuition Fee Free Policy, 2012 - 2018

Motion (by **Mr Aiye Tambua**) agreed to –

That the Parliament take note of the Paper and that the report be referred to the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts

**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY –
KEY DEPARTMENTAL INITIATIVES – MINISTERIAL STATEMENT –
MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF PAPER**

Mr TIMOTHY MASIU (South Bougainville – Minister for Communications and Information Technology) – Thank you, Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to present my ministerial statement in this House.

As honourable members may recall, in my last speech to Parliament, I highlighted some key sector challenges and interventions my Ministry undertook in 2020.

I highlighted the need for the ICT Sector to have proper coordination and oversight mechanisms; I also highlighted the urgency for major policy interventions in both the social and economic sectors; and I now take this time to provide updates of work undertaken since.

But firstly, let me again take this opportunity to again thank the Prime Minister Honourable James Marape for having the confidence in me and appointing me to hold a very challenging ministry since November 2019.

I have held this important responsibility for two years now and it has been an absolute honour and privilege to serve our people in this capacity.

The Ministry for ICT currently maintains oversight on three key agencies:

1. The Department of Information & Communications Technology as the policy and program coordination body.
2. The National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) as the government information dissemination body; and
3. The National Information & Communication Technology Authority (NICTA) as the broadcasting and radio and telecommunications regulatory body.

The following Acts of Parliament give meaning to the functions of these three agencies, and they include:

- *Broadcasting Corporation Act (Chapter 149);*
- *Television (Prohibition and Control) Act 1980*
- *Postal Services Act 1996;*
- *Printers and Newspapers Act (Chapter 151);*
- *Radio Spectrum Act 1996;*
- *Rural Development Act (Chapter 139);*
- *Telecommunications Industry Act 2002, and*
- *National Information and Communication Technology Act 2009.*

On the reform interventions taking place within the ICT Sector, you may recall the PNG Digital Transformation Policy that was approved by Cabinet in August of 2020.

This was the first major policy intervention in the ICT Sector after 12 years.

The PNG Digital Transformation Policy now provides a direction to facilitate digital transformation primarily within the public sector and has since triggered a sequence of events to date. These events include:

- The development and launch of the Department's Corporate Plan (2020-2024), in September 2020;
- The upgrading of the Office of Information Communication to the Department of Information Communications Technology in February 2021; and
- The overhaul and restructure of the Department in May 2021.

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Mr Speaker, as I speak, the Department of ICT is on a recruitment drive to engage a total of 105 positions.

The restructured Department of ICT now has an established digital government and information delivery wing that covers government cloud services, digital service standards, cyber security, cyber safety and digital information delivery.

Mr Speaker, for the first time, the Department of ICT is becoming structurally capable and relevant to the ever-changing technological environment. The Ministry has also sought Cabinet's endorsement to commence work on some critical digital government services, which includes:

- (1). A whole-of-government approach to government cloud technology services.
- (2). A Federated Secure Data Exchange Platform (also referred to as the integrated national information technology project) to facilitate electronic exchange and sharing of data amongst public bodies; and
- (3). A single window National e-Government Portal for citizens to have access to common public information and services.

The Ministry is also working closely with the Ministry for National Planning to deliver on two major Government projects for 2022 including Blockchain use in Digital Government and the procurement of a Satellite for Papua New Guinea.

Mr Speaker, the Cabinet has also endorsed through NEC decision No. 100/2021 the establishment of a Government Social Media Management Desk. The purpose of this desk

is to establish a clearance, standards, and registry process to ensure compliance with all government operating social media accounts and pages. Further to this, the desk is now tasked to monitor misinformation, take down and counter trending misinformation.

Mr Speaker, in the last three months, the Social Media Management Desk has stepped up to monitor and take down misinformation specific to Covid-19. In the first month alone, the desk was taking down between 50 to 100 misinformed posts per week.

For Covid-19 alone, we have found that in the last four weeks, misinformation is prevalent in these top four areas:

1. The side effect of the Covid-19 vaccines are dangerous,
2. The vaccine changes your DNA,
3. The vaccine is sorcery related, and
4. The vaccine is or equivalent to the Mark of the Beast or 666.

The desk is currently focused on taking down viral misinformed posts relating to vaccine, sorcery or religion. We also note that there is a lot of misinformation on how Covid-19 related allocation and expenditure by Government. We are encouraging public to report misinformation and harmful content to our Social Media Management Desk (via ict.gov.pg).

My department will continue its partnership with *Facebook*, the Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to maintain this desk, as well as maintain daily monitoring of other cyber-related issues.

We are also calling for all government agencies to step up online and regularly inform and interact with our people.

I thank the support of my colleague ministers that are recognizing the importance of this desk and I am also calling for funding support for this important initiative as we make our way into the 2022 General Election.

Mr Speaker, while on the topic of misinformation, I am also pleased to inform our people that our good Prime Minister has initiated every Monday night talk-back with NBC from 8pm to 10pm, where the Prime Minister regularly addresses the nation on Government's responses efforts to amongst other things, Covid-19 and the economy. This program is gaining popularity, giving the opportunity to ordinary Papua New Guineans to speak directly to the Prime Minister and contribute to the greater decision-making.

I want to commend our Prime Minister for the initiative which is directly promoting transparency and accountability. I also have a regular Covid-19 radio program that goes on air every Wednesdays and Fridays.

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When we started this programme, it was going on air every Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Mr Speaker, a major thrust of the 2007 ICT Sector reforms was the cessation of Telikom PNG's monopoly in the fixed and mobile communication, and the introduction of open market competition in the telecommunications space.

Today, ICT is no longer just telecommunication. We are now talking about a much broader scope that covers as far as media convergence, cloud technology, fintech, and artificial intelligence. It is for this reason that on 10 to 12 November (just last week), my Ministry hosted the first ever National ICT Summit. The National ICT Summit was a 100 percent virtual event.

It was part of my Ministry's initiative to engage with all stakeholders and to understand and establish current trends and development in PNG so that my Ministry can chart a clearer direction to inform a revised National ICT Policy. After the successful three-day Summit, I am delighted to inform that via Facebook, we achieved a reach of 52,000 through which we interacted with up to 15,000 and had close to four thousand viewers. With the outcomes of the Summit, the Ministry will now be pushing ahead with the drafting and or finalizing of a suite of enabling policies and legislations to further accelerate the Ministry's catch-up plan. These policies and legislations include: The National ICT Policy 2022. The Universal Access Service Policy 2022-2027, the National Broadband Policy 2022-2027, the National Cyber Security Policy, the Government Cloud Policy, Government Social-Media and Website Standards, Government DNS Standards, freedom of Information Policy, proposed Freedom of Information Bill, and of course the Digital Government Bill 2021.

Mr Speaker, the Department's 2021 Budget allocation was K8.28m and included an appropriation of K2.672m for administrative support service for the Ministry. With the initiated reforms, the Department is now required to be the lead agency on digital transformation within the government and the economy. To successively realize this national undertaking, and transform this country using ICT, we will require major budgetary support from the Government.

Mr Speaker, let me now turn to the National Broadcasting Corporation. When I took office in November 2019, it was obvious that almost all broadcast and transmission infrastructure - both here at the head quarter at five mile and in the Provinces - were in a poor state of disrepair after neglect of many years. The once far-reaching short and medium wave radio transmitters in the country had ceased to operate after 20 years, due to neglect by successive governments and management. The decision by global manufacturers of SW transmitters to scale down operations to go into newer broadcasting technologies also led to the demise of these once-powerful SW transmitters. Many of our provincial offices & studios were also either condemned by their respective provincial health authorities or on the verge of collapse. This forced many of our committed and dedicated staff to be either being relocated to other office buildings or forced to continue to work in their old studios that were not fit for human habitation. I have personally visited most NBC Provincial Stations and was reduced to tears when I saw the degree of decay and disrepair of these once-proud Provincial Stations.

Mr Speaker, when I took responsibility, my major priority was to install prudent financial management, service many of the debts and financial burdens that were carried over from previous years, put in people and systems to assist me turn MV NBC around, and plot a more prosperous path forward.

I ensured the immediate appointment of a new NBC Board Chairman, his Deputy and three (3) other board members.

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Mr Speaker, the re-invigoration and re-birth of NBC begun with the major maintenance of three (3) office and studio complexes of NBC New Ireland, NBC Morobe, and NBC Gulf in 2019. This was made possible through the interjection of K 1.5 million by the National Government through the 2019 PIP Budget. Through a further K5 million in the 2020 PIP Budget, we continued this major maintenance work in Enga, Western Highlands, Madang, Western, and NBC East New Britain provinces in 2020. We reopened NBC Western Highlands and NBC Enga in July 2020, and will shortly recommission NBC Western, NBC East New Britain and NBC Madang as their respective maintenance works are almost complete.

Mr Speaker, NBC has duly acquitted the 2019 PIP funds and the 2020 acquittals will be done as soon as the remaining three (3) maintenance projects are completed. The NBC management has this year tendered another six (6) maintenance projects. The

provincial Stations that will undergo major maintenance in 2021 to 2022 are NBC Southern Highlands, NBC Eastern Highlands, NBC Manus, NBC East Sepik, NBC West New Britain, and NBC Milne Bay. So, in total, NBC is expected to have renovated 14 provincial stations under the 2021 PIP Budget appropriation. If we maintain this current trend, we will easily complete our maintenance program by 2022.

Mr Speaker, when COVID-19 was first detected here in 2020, Papua New Guineans were caught unaware and unprepared, and the Government was forced to scramble to inform and educate our people on this deadly pandemic. In such a national calamity, the NBC again came to the rescue through its radio network across our beautiful country. During times of national emergencies and events including the live broadcast of the State Funerals of Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare and Sir Mekere Morauta, the 2018 APEC Summit, the 2017 General Elections, and the 2015 Pacific Games, the power and value of NBC, especially its radio service again came to the fore.

Mr Speaker, apart from maintenance work in the provincial stations, some of the PIP funds were also earmarked for the purchase of MW transmitters to boost the NBC radio coverage in the country. I am proud to state here that NBC technical staff have successfully installed a 10-Kilowatt MW Transmitter at the NBC Fimito Transmitter site in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province. I thank the Prime Minister for giving me the honour to officially commission this national infrastructure. I was graciously accompanied by the Governor for Eastern Highlands, Honourable Peter Numu and Member for Goroka Open, Honourable Aiye Tambua on the launch of this facility. The propagation map for this MW transmitter has plotted that the entire Highlands region and part of Momase should receive this NBC National Radio signal, and I have tasked the NBC technical staff to follow up and verify this conclusively.

Mr Speaker, I'm also pleased to announce that NBC has already ordered an aid for another three (3) similar 10-Kilowatt MW transmitters from the same supplier in Canada. We intend to replace the aging MW transmitter at our Waigani Transmitter site (for the Southern Region), another will be at Rabaul (NGI), and Madang (Mamose). Once all are installed and operational, NBC will be very close to meeting one of the Medium-Term Development Goals of "achieving 100% radio coverage in the country by 2030. "

Mr Speaker, another major initiative that I continue to push for all provincial governors and open members to seriously consider, is the proposed closer cooperation between NBC and the respective provincial administrations. You will recall that I highlighted this in my last statement.

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Since then, the NBC has signed MoUs with the provincial governments of West New Britain, Morobe and Enga. Others have been finalised but are yet to be signed between the parties.

Mr Speaker, the rationale for the MoU is quite simple. Since 1973, the NBC has maintained its presence in all provincial capitals. NBC currently maintains the fortnightly salaries of 13 staff from each office, electricity, staff accommodation, transmission costs, duty travel to gather content, and other daily operational expenses. But these provincial stations were established in all provinces for a deliberate reason and that is to work in tandem with the provincial administrations and the Government to reach more of our people in the districts and wards in our provinces. That is why I see the real need for a more cooperative partnership between NBC and the respective provincial governments and administrations through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Through such MOU arrangements, the provincial administrations can utilize the NBC radio and TV platforms to disseminate development and other awareness news and information to a greater majority of our people.

Provincial content can be shared on a 60-40 percentage between the two parties. In return the provincial governments can pick up some of the NBC costs like regular replacement and upgrade of transmission equipment and other infrastructures like office buildings and staff accommodation for all districts as well.

In this vein, I again commend and thank the following governors and their provincial administration for signing MOU with NBC and pledging financial support:

- Former West New Britain Governor, honourable Francis Maneke and Regional Member, Sasindran Muthuvel for the purchase of a MW radio transmitter that will cover the entire West New Britain Province.
- Governor of Morobe, honorable Ginson Saonu also led his team to sign their MOU with NBC recently for the construction of a new office complex for NBC Morobe;
- Governor of Enga, honorable Peter Ipatas for leading his team to sign their MOU with NBC on 18 July 2021 in Wabag; and

- The Member for Namatanai, honourable Walter Schnaubelt for financial support to improve NBC Radio and TV services in Namatanai, and I also urge the New Ireland Provincial Government to sign their MOU with NBC as soon as possible.

- The Member for Kandrian-Gloucester honourable Joseph Lelang through the District Development Authority provided funding for Radio and TV to be installed in his electorate. Phase One is complete and only awaiting the installation for Gloucester and Gasmata areas. A container with equipment is currently in Kandrian.

Mr Speaker, apart from undertaking major maintenance on our provincial stations, and increasing our coverage, I take this time to inform our people that Cabinet, last month, approved for the overhaul of NBC infrastructure from analog to digital (the A2D Project). This project is valued at K260 million and will see the introduction of digital only services, particularly digital channels with drastically improved picture and sound quality. From a business perspective, NBC will be able broadcast more channels with less spectrum resource, as a result, NBC will finally be on par with global best practice in broadcasting and will have transformed business capability. I thank the former Government for the lead in progressing this project in the initial stages and I thank this Government under the leadership of our Prime Minister for making this happen.

Mr Speaker, let me now turn my attention to other major infrastructure projects of this Government, which are aimed at achieving our collective objectives on service affordability and accessibility of these, two major milestones stand.

They are;

(1) The completion and operational commissioning of the Coral Sea Cable System; and the extension of the combined cellular mobile networks of both Digicel (PNG) Limited and the Kumul Telecommunications Group (Bemobile and Telikom).

(2) The PNG side of the Coral Sea Cable system was completed at the landing station at Kila Barracks, Port Moresby, NCD, and became operational in mid-February 2020.

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It is a 4,700 km fiber-optic cable with substantial capacity to enable ICT service providers, businesses, and citizens to have access to broadband and high-speed internet services.

We anticipate that the availability of these substantial broadband capacities will reduce wholesale input costs for retail operators and service providers.

NICTA is tasked with the responsibility to ensure a competitive market over time.

Mr Speaker, on mobile service base stations and tower sites; Digicel and Telikom have continued to upgrade their respective technologies and reach of their mobile networks in 2020.

Overall, the number of mobile sites in PNG grew by four per cent from December 2019. Operators are upgrading existing sites from 2G to 3G and 4G that is seeing an improvement of services to users.

Demand for fixed line and broadband services has generally shown little growth over the years as more users turn to mobile broadband.

In 2020, business subscribers accounted for over 64 per cent of total fixed subscriptions whilst the remaining were residential customers. Since 2009, mobile subscriptions in PNG increased by an average of 6.5 per cent.

The Ministry is carefully monitoring major changes taking place in the telecommunications space including:

- Government's process of merging Telikom and Bmobile;
- the introduction of a third operator, branded as Vodafone, in early 2022; and
- the acquisition of Digicel Pacific by Telstra which is subject to regulatory compliance.

With all these changes taking place, we project that in three to five years' time, mobile usage may jump from the current 2.5 million to 5 million plus users. Just to inform this Parliament, Telikom/B-mobile currently have 400 towers, Digicel has about 1300 towers in the country and Vodafone has 200 towers

Mr Speaker, international submarine cable and domestic fiber-based broadband services were made a declared service, meaning these services are subject to regulatory intervention to determine pricing to ensure they are affordable.

In 2020, NICTA reviewed the broadband capacity (including wholesale internet) rates and modified the wholesale access pricing principles determination from 1 January 2021.

PNG DataCo has continuously committed to reductions with wholesale prices dropping by 50 per cent since 2019. On the 15 November 2021, PNG DataCo will commence a substantial reduction to metro fibre connectivity services from K145 Mbps per month to K50.0 Mbps representing a 66 per cent reduction in wholesale price.

- Mr Speaker, SIM Card registration is mandatory and mobile service providers are required to register all their subscribers. As of the fourth quarter of 2020, all operators are in full compliance with SIM card registration. The first audit of SIM Registration was undertaken by NICTA in October 2020 to ensure registration was implemented by mobile network operators.

Mr Speaker, on the issuance of licenses to newly established ICT service providers; five (5) Individual Network Licences, three (3) Individual Network Gateway Licences, seven (7) Individual Applications Licences, and eight (8) Registration of Class Operator Licenses were issued. This is an indication of continued growth in the ICT sector over the past years.

Mr Speaker, I also want to inform the House on the implementation of the Universal Access Scheme (UAS).

Part V of the *National ICT Act 2009* provides for the Universal Access Scheme, under which NICTA may impose a revenue-related levy on operators to form part of the funding to promote the long-term economic and social development of PNG.

This year's project implementation is targeted towards mobile broadband and broadcasting services. This includes upgrading existing 2G mobile (voice/text) in under-served and unserved rural areas to 3G+ mobile broadband that would otherwise not be commercially viable in the foreseeable future.

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Since 2019, a total of 90 base stations have been upgraded from 2G-3G to 3G-4G, thus enabling Internet access.

Mr Speaker, during the National ICT Summit, one of the most important observations I made was the interest and engagements from the SME's. It is from this that I announced for the Universal Access Scheme to be revised and incorporated and ICT Incubation Centre Concept.

The idea is that the Department of ICT could work in close consultation with NICTA, Business Council, SME Corporation, MSME Council to establish and ICT Incubation Centre where SME's can have support with rent, internet, cloud-based services, and financial literacy subsidy. This is where we are embracing the ICT clusters because that is where we want to go, in making sure we do not leave our small people by themselves.

Mr Speaker, I wish to also inform this honorable House that there are several projects that are supported by our international partners including the International

Telecommunications•Union (ITU), the Internet Society, Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT), and others.

Connecting our primary schools and establishing the 'digital transformation centre' at the University of Technology are some of these projects aimed at building digital skills to bridge the skills gap to ensure citizen participation in the digital economy.

"Connect the Farmers - Livestock Traceability" is another project implemented in Jiwaka Province including the livestock traceability system using Blockchain Technology and training on AgriTech to promote the digital literacy of women and youth in the communities.

Mr Speaker, satellites play a crucial role to improve lives in today's digital economy. Nearly every industry and economies rely upon satellite technology in some way for telecommunication, earth exploration and science and emergency communication services.

The ICT Regulator ensures the rational, equitable, efficient and economic use of spectrum and orbit resources in accordance with the ITU Radio Regulations. It also provides technical coordination services including satellite filing services which provides for satellite operators to file for frequency and orbital positions.

There have been public concerns about the potential health risks arising from electromagnetic (EM) field radiation exposure within public amenities and residential areas. Hence, to address this, NICTA is developing regulatory guidelines for the construction of new towers and related antenna structures. These guidelines will be subject to public consultation.

Mr Speaker, whilst we embrace digital technologies as a necessary tool under new normal, it comes with its own challenges. A major challenge is the security of our information and systems when we conduct business online.

You all are aware by now that Government's financial system; the Integrated Finance Management System (IFMS) was recently attacked.

Prior to the cyber-attack, our government, through the Digital Transformation Policy 2020, recognized the need and identified cyber security as a key priority.

My Ministry then took immediate steps to incorporate cyber security functions within the restructured Department of ICT.

Most importantly, my Ministry initiated and took to Cabinet drafting instructions for the proposed Digital Government Bill 2021. We expect this legislation to empower the

Department of ICT to be a central coordinating body to enforce amongst other measures, cyber security standards.

Let me stress that having the Digital Government Bill 2021 passed is now the most important step required for Government to ensure that cyber security measures are enforced across all our critical infrastructure and system.

Mr Speaker, at this juncture, let me also announce that just last week, we concluded work on the National Cyber Security Policy. My Ministry has submitted to Cabinet for endorsement.

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We now anticipate instructions from Cabinet to commence Cyber Security audits across all public bodies and this will run parallel with the full operationalization of the National Cyber Security Centre and the PNG Cyber Emergency Response Team.

Mr Speaker, in concluding, we anticipate that through the digital transformation initiatives the Government is leading, it will spur the growth in SMEs, businesses, and stimulate the country's economy.

All Government systems from national to sub-national agencies will be integrated and the information and data would be shared in a secured environment across the whole of Government in real-time, guided by a common policy, standards and legal framework.

The broadcasting services, radio and television should reach 100 per cent coverage by 2030, including availability of fast and reliable internet services.

For PNG to harness the full potential of digital technologies to transform its economy, it requires a certain degree of coordination and collaboration. That has been addressed through the strengthening of key institution and the development of policy and legal framework necessary to support digital transformation.

This Government through my ministry has set the foundation digital transformation but there is a lot more work to be done beyond 2022; as you can imagine, ICT is an evolving industry and technologies, trends and practices continue to evolve.

Mr Speaker, I commend this statement to this Honorable House.

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

That the Parliament take note of the Paper

Debate adjourned.

MOTION BY LEAVE

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschhafen-Minister for Planning and Monitoring) – I ask leave of the Parliament to move a motion without notice.

Leave granted

PERMANENT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON CITIZENSHIP MATTERS – APPOINTMENT OF THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

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

That Mr Allan Bird be appointed Deputy Chairman of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Citizenship Matters.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the Parliament do now adjourn

The Parliament adjourn at 1.10 p.m.