

FIRST DAY

Tuesday, 10 January 2023

DRAFT HANSARD

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FIRST DAY

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The Parliament met at 2 p.m., as per the resolution of 2nd December 2022.

The Deputy Speaker (**Mr Koni Iguan**) took the Chair.

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

Sitting suspended.

The Deputy Speaker again took the Chair at 2.45p.m., and invited the Member for Pomio, **Honourable Elias Kapavore**, to say Prayers;

Papa lo heven mi kolim nem bilon yu lon dispela avinun. Mi laik tok ten kyu lo yu givim nupela yia lo dispela avinun. Mipela tok tenk yu lo yu kisim mipela kam lo dispela Palamen lo statim ken bung blo mipela ken lo dipela yia. Tete mipela askim nem bilong yu bikos nem bilong yu gat stron, wantaim pawa, wisdom, stia na provision. Mi komitim Praim Minista, Oposison Lida ol ministas, govanas, na olgeta membas lon dispela Palament, we yu givim gutpela tintin lon mekim gutpela decision lo stretim kantri blong yumi namel lon planti challenges istap. Mipela prei na save olsem taim yu stap in charge lo kantri blong mipela, olgeta samtin bai iken stap orait tu. Mipela lusim olgeta pipol bilong mipela oli stap harim lon radio rait around the kantri yu yet yu save lo olgeta chaleges mipela go tru lon en. Wantaim halivim bilong yu mipela ken abrusim ol dispela hevi. Em preia mipela askim lon nem bilon Jisas. Amen.

DEATHS OF FORMER MEMBERS –

Messrs JACOB JUMAGOT AND WESLEY ZURENUC –

STATEMENT BY MR DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform the Parliament of the death of;

(a) Mr Jacob Jumagot on 19 of November 2022. He was elected as Member for Manus Provincial in the Seventh National Parliament from 2022 to 2007.

During that Term, he served as a Member of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Laws and Acts and Subordinate Legislations between 2002 and 2007; and

(b) Mr Wesley Zurenuoc on 10 December 2022. He was elected as Member for Nawae Open Electorate in the Seventh National Parliament from 2002 to 2007.

During that term, he served as a Member of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings and Culture and Tourism between 2002 and 2007.

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

2023 NEW YEARS WELCOME SPEECH – STATEMENT BY Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers, all Government Members, the Opposition Leader and the Opposition Members, on behalf of the Speaker of the National Parliament, let me welcome each and every one of you to the new year and the first Parliament Meeting of this year 2023. Let me on behalf of the National Parliamentary Service extend my warmest New Year greetings to you all.

02/01

QUESTIONS

Jet A-1 Fuel Shortage

Mr WILLIAM POWI – Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Before I ask my series of questions, I would like to wish you, the Deputy Speaker and the members of Parliament a Happy New Year. It is good to see you all in one accord despite all the challenges.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the series of questions, are directed to the Minister for Treasury but he is not here so I'll ask the Prime Minister, and he can answer it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a lot of talk has happened in recent weeks and days in relation to the problem with Bank of PNG and InterOil regarding fuel shortage. There is a lot of issues circulating on social media, where people are talking about the Bank of PNG having low foreign reserves.

(1) Can the Prime Minister inform this Parliament and the people of Papua New Guinea if this is true or not?

Mr Deputy Speaker, what is the real issue behind the war of words or the dispute between the InterOil refinery and the Bank of PNG.

(2) Can the Prime Minister clarify to the people what the issue is about?

InterOil refines petrol and here using our resources and yet they make it so difficult as if we ordered this from overseas to sell it again. The people of Papua New Guinea are confused regarding this issue, especially when there are talks about the fuel shortage, the Bank of PNG and InterOil.

(3) Can the Prime Minister clarify why fuel is very costly despite being produced in the country?

I think the people of Papua New Guinea need some direction and answers from the government.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Firstly, I want to thank the Governor of Southern Highlands for asking these important questions. Before I respond, I just want to wish you, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Speaker who is flying in from Manus, as well as all members of Parliament including those opposite and the Opposition Leader a very good 2023. We look forward to God's blessings one more time and continue to work for our country in 2023.

I just want to thank the Governor for asking these important questions. The Bank of PNG is our country's regulator of the financial sector and the mother of our commercial banks in our country. It holds our foreign reserves. It regulates foreign transactions and holds financial transactions in our country. Its full responsibility is to ensure that all transactions are done legitimately and correctly in our country including its greater role in answering that the foreign reserve threshold in our country is at the rate that is sustainable for our economy. The Bank of PNG makes interventions once in a while especially in the monthly release of US dollar into commercial banks for them to transact and supply those who need the US dollar for imports. So, in that order, the Bank does its role to ensure all who are transacting using US dollars transactions in the country are concerned done correctly.

03/01

Lately, they have run a file against what they believe was an unusual order of foreign exchange from Puma.

Mr Deputy Speaker, InterOil has since left the business of refinery at Napa Napa about eight or nine years ago, when Puma came in and bought over InterOil interest in that refinery. Since 1997, when the refinery was first established by InterOil, they were supposed to purchase Kutubu crude oil to refine and they would have been a monopoly to supply oil and petroleum products especially; diesel, Jet A1 fuel and all the other products from that refinery.

But since then it wasn't effectively shown. When we met, I had a pleasure taking the Minister for Petroleum and Energy and Minister for Finance and Planning as a witness to my meeting with Puma on Sunday. I did put it to them that we will not tolerate our country's economy being held to ransom especially when a supply is suddenly cut. But, they explained and the demand or requirement for them to purchased the new fuel supply was short.

The Bank of PNG did not allow Puma to be on the board for the commercial banks to supply foreign exchange for them to make the purchase for the new order to come in. That is because of some issues that the Bank of PNG felt Puma need to respond to. Puma did show me 13 issues that the Bank of PNG raised and their response insofar as those issues were concerned.

Today, I met the Central Bank Governor and the team with Chief Secretary and the team at the office, they responded that they are working to resolve these issues. There are some regulatory issues that Bank of PNG felt Puma need to respond to. Puma has responded to them, the Department of Treasury and Prime Minister's Department will try to arbitrate so that we do not stop the immediate supply of fuel, but at the same time the issues are addressed through due process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Central Bank is an independent bank, they operate at arm's length from the Treasury and Executive Government who control the fiscal policy. The Central Bank control the monetary policy. The balance of these two essential policies space ensures our economy is functional.

In response to the first question by the Governor regarding the foreign exchange threshold right now, I want to inform our country again, that the foreign exchange we have to date is K13 billion equivalent sitting in our Central Bank. That is the highest amount ever being held by the country in reserve by Central Bank since 1975. The last time was during the NA Government's tenure ship. When they were in office, the Central Bank reserve peaked at around K9 billion equivalent.

In the last three years, through good use of fiscal policy, especially, when we borrowed from cheap concessional US dollar denominated borrowings; as well as our increase in agriculture export, these consistently kept our reserves at high. It has been growing from K12 billion this year. I was informed by Central Bank that we are sitting in excess of K13 billion. In the Central Bank, that is a reserve that can cover for almost a year's worth of supply.

Usually, Central Bank keeps in reserve enough to cover for six to nine months, we have one-year worth of supply in our foreign reserves. And so foreign reserves are not actually US dollar available for transaction. This is not an issue, right now is just the requirement by Central Bank.

04/01

We have asked the Central Bank to look at the way they are doing business. For instance, requirements need to be posted clearly to those who use and need US dollars to transact. We are working with Central Bank to ensure that access to foreign currency is much easier on the market, so businesses that need foreign currencies could be supplied the foreign currencies they need for their purchase.

The issues of Puma Energy and Inter Oil are being looked at. Puma Energy did inform us that there is no strict monopoly at the moment. We do have other importers like Exxon Mobil and a few others. For example, Lihir imports its own fuel. Imports is happening right now and there is no monopoly.

The reason why Air Niugini had to shut down last week was when Puma issued that moratorium. Air Niugini had a contract with Puma, Puma was to be the only supplier of Jet-A1 fuel to Air Niugini. For public safety, they felt that when Puma was trying to stop the supply of fuel and Air Niugini couldn't compromise public safety and transport, they issued the stop flight notice.

We impressed upon Puma and the Bank of Papua New Guinea (BPNG) that there must not be any more surprises. We fix the short-term issues and allow transactions from Puma to take place whilst in the medium-term, let us fix the issues that Puma needs to respond upon. Clear that out and we work towards a long-term solution that includes accessing cheaper, if not accessing fuel from Kutubu crude and for us to have downstream processing in our country in the not too distant future.

The government has already given signal to MRDC and Kumul Petroleum to look into downstream processing of fuel in our country. We have also signalled Puma and Santos to tidy

up on buying Kutubu crude using kina, and to have Kutubu crude processed in the country instead of buying it with US dollars. At the moment, Kutubu crude is being sold outside and Puma is importing the finished product from outside that we sell in our country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to sum up the good questions asked by the Governor of Southern Highlands, as we speak today for public interest, the issues that Central Bank has raised have not been compromised. If indicated to Puma, these are issues, as regulators, they have rights to look into them. Puma and Central Bank have been asked to sit together in a tripartite meeting to be facilitated by the Executive Government for those issues to be resolved as we work towards long-term solutions to giving this country an energy security, including us accessing domestic produced fuel or fuel production in our own country.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

School Fees Subsidies

Mr PETER ISOAIMO – Happy New Year to the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, ministers, vice-ministers, governors and members of Parliament.

My question is directed to the good Minister for Education in relation to school fees for this year. Whilst we have appropriated monies for free education in the 2023 National Budget, we have schools and institutions issuing notices to parents and guardians to pay up school fees in advance before schools' resumes.

We need clarity on this, so we are all on par or uniformity when it comes to government policy but more or so for the free education policy.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr JIMMY UGURO – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I also thank the Member for Kairiku for a very good question in regards to school fees.

Before I comment on this, I would like to thank our government for continuously supporting our parents and students with school fees throughout the country. This year, our government is continuing to pay school fees for elementary to grade twelve throughout the country.

We are continuously educating our parents, teachers and communities about the school fee roll-out in our country by our government. We have started this since we took the office. We have allocated K632 million school fee subsidy from elementary all the way to grade twelve.

05/01

The government has paid school fees already and this year we have rolled it out, this morning we were talking to the Treasury Department to roll out this year's first term school fees. I want to inform all parents of this nation that the government has paid all school fees and that no board, headteacher or school board is allowed to ask for school fees.

Last year a total of K632 million was paid and the same will be applied this year. This government is paying the fees on time before the academic year starts this year and likewise before the academic year ended last year. For the so-called 'project fees', a total of K160 million has also been paid by the Marape/Rosso Government, they have been paid last year. These monies were not accessible last year as we did not want the school boards and head teachers to access it as some form of personal ATM machine. Not that we are branding them as thieves but we want these monies to be used for their intended purposes.

This was the reason I directed the banks to halt the access of this until the beginning of the academic year this year. These monies must be used in accordance with the plans set out by the schools, their infrastructure, training and other developmental needs.

To the school boards, and head teachers; do not mislead our people or parents that they should pay school fees and project fees. Parents are advised to report to education authorities in your province if schools are asking for school fees or project fees.

Schools are advised to draw up their budgets before monies are sent to their school accounts. To the MPs, and the Governors, take note the government is paying school fees so please work with our education department and officers on the ground. If you have any issues, feel free to contact me or the department in your respective districts and provinces. The government will continue to pay school fees this year, it is already being budgeted for so we are going to have it rolled out as we go through the rest of the academic year.

Land For Economic Development

Ms. KESSY SAWANG - Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Before I proceed on, I would like to say a Happy New Year to all the Members of Parliament. My question is directed to the Minister for Lands and Physical Planning.

As you are aware one of the government's strategic key priority is economic growth and one of the strategies that we use is that of the Special Economic Zones. Apart from other challenges that we have like reliable and cheaper energy and sustainable infrastructure; the land itself is a big issue and it is locked in the hands of the landowners.

(1) What are your department's plan to free up land for economic development?

Land is communally owned in Papua New Guinea and it is one of the greatest wealth that our people have.

(2) What strategies are you using to acquire land from our people, so that they are not robbed off their very important asset, not only today but the future generations to come?

06/01

Mr JOHN ROSSO – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thank the good Member for Rai Coast for asking that pertinent question. Before I start, I'd like to wish everyone in this House a happy new year. It is good to see all your faces again.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as the good Member for Rai Coast has pointed out, currently this year, we have a budget of K150 million for land expansion in our country. We have had a lot of issues with land, especially in towns and cities like Port Moresby, Lae, Madang, Hagen, and Goroka. You will see that a lot of public servants and well-educated people live in settlement and come to work. So, the Government in its wisdom decided to acquire more land to increase what we currently have as alienated land. The alienated land in the country is around 3 to 4 per cent out of the total land bank in our country.

So, if we expand the land, one of the idea is to build a couple of suburbs in Port Moresby by working closely with the good NCD Governor and members for Moresby. Since 80s, we have not had any more land expansion so this will try to solve some of those problems that we have today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our people are being evicted and thrown out of the land. Those people who are working are not having proper acquired land titles and are living on customary land. It will help both sides; the customary landowners and the government to also put roofs over people's head. So, this program is part and parcel of that.

So, with the suburbs in our cities, the expansion of land in Port Moresby and Lae starts this year, for example we'll create another 10, 000 allotments in Gerehu suburb.

Mr Deputy Speaker, those suburbs will not only expand and put roofs over head of our people but it will also contribute to having an income for our government. For example, for the 10, 000 allotments, you will also have maybe in land rates alone, you will probably earn K15 million per annum coming back into our Government coffers into our consolidated revenue. For power bills alone, if you are paying a power bill of K100 a fortnight, for 10, 000 allotments, you will have K26 million coming into PNG Power.

For water and sewerage, if you pay K50 per month, you will roughly have K6 million per annum into Water PNG. So, it's not about acquiring land but we also making money so in one suburb, you will probably make K40 to K50 million that will come back to consolidated revenue to go towards the next expansion next year for the budget next year in the urban areas.

For our agricultural areas, we will be looking at acquiring land in Western Province, West New Britain and Middle Ramu so that we can work together on agricultural allotments and build infrastructure and acquire land for development purposes in agriculture.

Let's say, for example, if we have 10,000 allotments acquired for agriculture purposes in the field of oil palm and you have 20 hectares each with 10,000 allotments and making an income roughly based at K20,000 per annum for each individual allotment, you will be able to make K200 million adding onto the income gross for the whole country.

So, we are looking at expansion and we are not trying to spend money so K150 million will be going for the next four (4) years so that we can expand our current land banking of four per cent at the moment and increase it to six per cent because a lot of investors that are coming into our country are scared of dealing directly with the landowners. We have to give them the confidence and security by acquiring the land.

Some of the land, 50 per cent will be acquired to put police station and government centres which we may outright to acquire.

For others like residential and business, we will try and do it in partnership with the landowners so that the landowners also have equity in this stake similar to some of the concepts we have already successfully delivered. Not just talk about it but successfully delivered. For example, Tuhava which is a concept we've acquired land from the local landowners and they are now sitting and benefiting from that land development and work in partnership with the developers.

So this land development program, I can assure the good Madam that it's a focus for the government in trying to expand our current land holdings to ensure that our people get security, build new houses for them, put roofs over them, fix our settlements properly in our cities and urban areas and also build new towns like at Nadzab and also in Kikori.

07/01

We will be expanding places like Kokopo, Madang and Goroka for tourism purposes.

I wish I had more time to explain a bit more but hopefully, that is enough to clarify to Parliament.

Thank you.

Mr LUTHER WENGE – Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for granting me leave to ask my question this afternoon. My question is directed to the Minister for Transport but I am not sure whether the Minister is within the precincts of the Chamber?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Governor, the Minister is not present so you can direct your question to the Prime Minister.

Railway Construction – Morobe Province

Mr LUTHER WENGE – Mr Prime Minister, first of all, I would like to thank you on behalf of the people of Morobe Province, for providing K150 million in the Budget to ensure that we purchase land that is necessary to expand the city because we are considering moving the capital of Morobe, Lae city to Nadzab. We are soon going to make the announcement but with that being the case and before that is achieved, we have to make sure that we purchase land from the traditional landowners and state land. I would like to thank the Prime Minister for that allocation in this budget.

Mr Prime Minister, although we are vigorously involved in building four and two-lane roads along the highways or patching up the city of Lae to Watarais and to Ramu is sitting on the water. So, it doesn't matter to whatever degree you try to patch or extend the roads, there will always be potholes.

Mr Prime Minister, I want us to make history in this country and I want to propose to you in a humble way; if we can begin to construct a railway on posts. Of course, the engineers can design the best way possible but I am speaking common sense. Can we build a railway on posts from Lae city to Watarais and to Ramu and beyond? So that heavy cargo from the Highlands can be parked in Watarias and loaded on the carriages of the train to be taken to the city of Lae or where the parking area is. Similarly, for the Ramu Oil which can be filled in containers and also taken to Lae.

Mr Prime Minister, I humbly ask you if we can make history, the Morobe Government is ready to support you.

Thank you, Mr Prime Minister.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to appreciate the Governor of Morobe for asking this important short provoking question.

The option of a railway to service Morobe coming out of Lae, deep into Markham, and possibly into Ramu and extending all the way to East Sepik Plains and Vanimo is there. We already have our Department of Transport and Kumul Consolidation Holdings looking into this option.

This transport system can possibly be utilized with our public-private partnership policies in place for a private investor to come into this space and partner the Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you would know that Markham all the way to Ramu and to the Sepik Plains is a huge agricultural area that we are trying to unbundle and open following the Deputy Speaker's Statement on land acquisition in partnership with provincial governments and our local landowners. So we have definitely looked into the option of using the railway from Lae to Wutung in Vanimo, as I make my response to this question.

08/01

Any private investors who wants to partner the National Government or the provincial governments for this opportunity. For instance, we could stop highways from coming into Lae city and Lae wharf, from train out into an inland Port somewhere in the Markham Valley to be dispatched into the Highlands, those options are being looked at. Transport Department was working into a policy, so I will get this back to the Parliament and the Governor. If the Governor has an important suggestion we look forward into partnering your provincial Government and any other private investors out there to look into this important option, you are very much welcomed.

The last trip we took from Kikori to Madang, I descended into the Ramu and Markham valley and I saw oil palm coming into place where there was no oil palm before. There is a huge potential there. Railway is an option that we are looking very much into any private investors who want to partner us, including our super funds, the National Government is looking into that space also. Thank you very much.

Rehabilitation of the Highlands Highway

Mr WILLIAM HAGAHUNO – Thank you Deputy Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for Works and Highways.

Deputy Speaker, some time ago, the Government secured K3 billion ADB loan to fund the rehabilitation of the Highlands Highway. This work is still yet to be completed and we understand that the highway has been sub divided and given to different companies to work on. This highway is a very important highway, that is why the Government secured this loan.

I don't drive pass Goroka but the condition of the work and the contractors working on this highway, the standard and quality of the work I am not clear on. The leaders who go beyond Goroka know what is really happening up on the highway. I only go up to Goroka and back. Three to four years have passed and the work is still outstanding and lately the Prime Minister and his team passed through Goroka down to Kainantu and then to Kassam pass and I believe a lot of the leaders know what I am talking about. From Henganofi down to Watarais, the roads are very bad. Four different companies that were engaged have worked on that part of the Highway.

My question to the Works Minister is that, which company has the Department engaged to work on that section? When will the work on this road finish? We are in the new year now and I don't want our people to be travelling on the highway with high risk of potholes, used materials that are lying around on the road and the continuous land slips that are creating a high risk for my people. Criminal activities are increasing because of the many potholes and a lot of people in that area are travelling with fear along the highway especially during the Christmas and new Year period because they have gone through so many experiences. Those are the two questions that I have directed to the Works Minister and I would like some assurance on when that section of the road will be completed and our people can travel freely in that area. My other two big questions are why we didn't engage any reputable experienced civil constructional companies based here in Papua New Guinea but instead we engaged companies that don't have that experience and the job is taking them years to complete the job. Is that a condition of the loan or was it a decision that we made?

My next question is who are the engineers that are supervising or managing the road works? Is the Department of Works managing it because I haven't seen any engineers from Works supervising the work when I am driving passed.

These are the four questions I would like the Works Minister to answer and the people will know. Thank you.

09/01

Mr SOLAN MIRISIN – Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Kainantu for his very important question. Before, I respond to his questions, let me take this time to extend my warmest new year greeting to all the Leaders in this Parliament and I look forward to working with you all for a prosperous 2023.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in regards to the Highlands Highway maintenance, it has been three years now since work began and it is under the Asian Development Bank program.

They engaged individual contractors for certain sections of that highway. Those contractors that were engaged are very reputable construction companies.

Many of those construction companies that were engaged passed the Asian Development Bank bidding process and were engaged by the management and its Board through a public tendering process and were recommended to the National Executive Council for endorsement.

I would like to inform this Parliament that the awarding of contractors is not the NEC but the ADB and its Board and management.

The portion of the Highlands highway road that starts from Kagamuga down to Nadzab is entirely funded by the Asian Development Bank program in partnership with the National Government.

The Section from the Watarais up to Henganoffi is a section that requires maintenance and as the major construction and rehabilitation is ongoing there is a need for urgent maintenance work that needs to be carried out so a pot-hole brigade company is required to make sure the road is user friendly for the public to travel. You could travel for almost nine hours but with this program most sections are good and have been sealed from Mt Hagen down to Nadzab.

We are now in consultation with ADB to include in its program maintenance and allocate enough funding so that the said section can be thoroughly worked on and as the major rehabilitation is taking place, temporary road maintenance can allow for the public to use a good condition road traveling up and down.

My department is asking for close to K40 million and hopefully our negotiations with ADB can be fruitful by the end of this week and I can assure the honourable Member that the certain section he is concerned about will be addressed soon.

In regards to the engagement of engineers, they are engaged and paid by the ADB to design and scope the projects with its costings.

The same goes for the Connect-PNG Program and we have engaged some consultants to facilitate the technical aspects of that program starting from Wutung down to Hiritano. Most engineers are engaged by the ADB and they pay for their services.

The information is readily available and the contractors use those designs for the maintenance and rehabilitation of roads.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope I have covered all of the Members concerns raised in all that I have presented in my response.

10/01

The engineers are working at their best on the materials they are using so that it can be long term so that the road that they are sealing can last up to twenty, to forty years. So, this too is like that, I would like to assure the member for Kainantu that now we are here we will start working on this section now.

Thank you.

Contract Awarding of the Magi Highway

Sir PUKA TEMU – Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Happy New Year to everyone, the Chair, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Honourable Leaders.

My question without notice also goes to the hard-working Minister for Works and Highways. Last year, before we went to the Election, I asked the former Minister for Works and Highways about the status of the Magi Highway. I invited the then minister to come with me for a ride on the Magi highway because the state of the highway was really bad. Being from Abau where I have to traverse Rigo side of the Magi Highway, I go on a weekly trip on this highway.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the same company was awarded a contract I believe for patching of the Magi Highway. The same company was also awarded this time to do the same job and they have started from Six Mile passing Gaire now and they are now going to the other side in Magi Highway into Kupiano.

This particular company on the sealed component of the road, which deteriorated in the last contract, just took sand and filled the potholes on the sealed roads. And you and I know, that when it rains everything went back to, not square one but square minus one. Deteriorated!

Mr Minister through the Chair, is this the standard of fixing sealed roads by just taking the sand on the side of the road and filling up the patches, and come rain, we award the same contractors to do the same contractor again? As just an ordinary citizen I think it's not right, I think it's wrong.

I don't see engineers from the Department of Works going and supervising the work, they are not testing the soil that they throw over the potholes in the sealed roads. I thought maintaining the pothole of sealed roads is completely different and you just don't throw sand on the road because when the rain comes in that same night the same hole will appear.

(1) Are there standards for maintaining pothole on sealed roads?

So, this section from Saroa-Keina to Alepa, minister please take the names down. Saroa-Kaina where the bridge is to Alepa village is the worse section of the Magi highway. It

takes me three hours to get to Kupiano but on this road I spend one hour just going on first gear. And so, somebody has to tell the nation what is the standards of doing maintenance on pot holes on seal roads, I am saying that that's not the way seal roads repairs are done.

(2) I have been advised that the tender has been won for are two lanes sealing from a bridge called Imila to Moreguina turn-off. Can the minister confirm whether this information is true because nothing has taken place?

(3) The bridge called Imila, where the sealing road ends; the runners fall down nearly every week onto the Imila river and the young people will go and pick them up and go and put them back. How long will this national road bridge be falling down everywhere. Aren't there engineers? I have to run to the secretary for works every time I come back to Abau. Nothing has happened, the re-decking using the new material is from Omen bridge and Lako bridge.

11/01

Re-decking of the bridges stop there and all the bridges are still wood and old-World War II runners steel deck. Can the Minister assure me that under the bridges program, can the remaining be done by the same standard as the Omen bridge, the new decking which is very good and the Lako?

So, can I request the Minister to come with me for a ride on the Magi Highway so that you can know exactly what I feel every week when I go on the road.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, our question time has lapsed but since the Member has already asked the question, you may continue and reply to it.

Mr SOLAN MIRISIM – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I thank the leader and Member for Abau for raising those important questions.

The road maintenance from Magi Highway to Abau, we have put on tender. The full road sealing of two lanes, we have funding issues and waiting for the BSP loan of almost K1 billion for this road. When this K1 billion is released, we will start sealing the road from Port Moresby to Abau and also do maintenance work on the bridges.

To patch the pothole on the seal roads are just maintenance and emergency work for smooth movement of car but the full sealing of the road, we are waiting for the funds to be released. So, when the funding is released the work will commence on the Magi Highway to Abau.

So, under the Marape-Rosso Government through the Connect PNG Program, this is a priority road. We have engaged a contractor and it did some maintenance work along the highway because the contractor hails from that area. It is good for us to engaged him so that maintenance work is ongoing whilst awaiting major contract can be awarded to him to commence sealing on this road.

So, we are doing maintenance work but some section of the roads is deteriorating due to bad weather condition. So, the contractor is still working there.

Coming towards the end of the year, the funding of road maintenance is hindered because of slowness in paper work. We have our district or provincial Works engineers present on the ground to ensure they report back to the Secretary. So, those section of the roads that you have mentioned is just maintenance work and its not permanent work.

Those bridges from Imila to Moreguina and apart from other bridges and road programs, we have NEC submission. So, we will look at rural bridges; like national highway bridges, one of them is 200-meter bridge from Pomio and from other parts as well.

So, we will get endorsement and will give priority to those bridges but I want to assure the Member that it is under the Connect PNG program.

12/01

For this year, when funding comes in for the road, you will be driving on sealed road after a year or so.

I assure you that we will go there for a weekend before that happens. If you want, we can go this weekend. When I come back, we will start work on that road. Thank you and I hope I have answered your questions.

MOTION BY LEAVE

Mr JELTA WONG (Gazelle – Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources) – I ask leave of Parliament to move a motion without notice.

Leave granted.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Motion (by **Mr Jelta Wong**) agreed to –

(a) That the leave of absence be granted to Sir Julius Chan, MP (Member for New Ireland Provincial), Honourable Chris Haiveta, MP (Member for Gulf Provincial, and the Honourable Powes Parkop, MP (Member for National Capital District) for the duration of this meeting on medical grounds.

(b) The Honourable Anderson Mise, MP (Member for Aitape – Lumi) for a week to attend to a death in the family.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by **Mr Jelta Wong**) agreed to –

That Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 3.35 p.m.