

THIRD DAY

Thursday 12 January 2023

DRAFT HANSARD

Subject:

Page No:

QUESTIONS.....	1
Hacking of IFMS	1
Powers Of Provincial Government	4
Off-Grid Power Supply.....	6
Fix PNG Power Issues	8
Wau-Bulolo Highway Rehabilitation	11
Alluvial Mining Law.....	12
Education – Management Policy	13
 MOTION OF CONCURRENCE	 15
 ADMISSION OF THE AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER	 15
 WELCOME SPEECH BY THE SPEAKER.....	 15
 ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT BY HONOURABLE ANTHONY ALBANESE MP, PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA -.....	 16
 RESPONSE TO ADDRESS, BY HONOURABLE JAMES MARAPE, MP AND PRIME MINISTER OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA.....	 22
 ADJOURNMENT	 26

THIRD DAY

Thursday 12 January 2023

The Speaker (**Mr Job Pomat**) took the Chair at 10 a.m. and invited the Member for Rai Coast, **Honourable Kessy Sawang** to say Prayers;

“Heavenly Father we want to say thank you so much for the gift of life and the gift of health that you have given us so we can come here today in this Parliament for the people of this land to meet and make decisions and discuss for the benefit of our people. Thank you for the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Speaker and all the Members of Parliament here today as we commit this House to you. We pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us in the discussion and all the activities of today. We also ask for your forgiveness as mere man and women of unclean lips, and inspire us with your principles and values of love, compassion and kindness so we can serve your people with humility. This is our prayer we commit in the name of the lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

QUESTIONS

Hacking of IFMS

Mr GARRY JUFFA – Thank you Mr Speaker, I direct my questions to the Minister for Finance. regarding the alleged hacking of our IFMS system two year ago.

Around this time last year, I asked the question as to what was going to happen in regards to investigating that particular situation. The parliament was informed by the then Minister for Finance Honourable Sir John Pundari, that the matter had been handed over to the National Intelligence Office (NIO) for investigation.

It is now over one year and some of us are still having this IFMS issues in our provinces and we would like to know since the NIO took up the investigation of the apparent alleged hacking of the IMFS system.

What measures have we put in place to prevent this from happening again?

Mr RAINBO PAITA – Mr Speaker, I thank the Governor of Northern for his important question in relation to the malware hacking last year.

Mr Speaker, when that incident took place, the Cabinet took reactive measures to the alleged attack on the system that governs our financial system especially within the Government.

National Executive Council issued certain directives to the Minister for Finance to undertake.

02/03

The IFMS is a system that is used in most of our provinces and our districts so, when the Central Agencies of government were affected by this malware attack throughout our districts and provinces, we had to take measures, which indicated migrating some of our accounts from IFM system to the COVID-19 accounts and other subsidiary accounts that we had setup. This was so that we could create leeway for us to deal with it and at the same time establish the cause.

In response to the question of what was done, yes, as I am briefed, NIO, including our own Finance Department through the ICT Division within Finance was tasked to establish what was the cause of this malware attack.

I am announcing to this Floor that I have received the preliminary findings and what was the cause from our department. I am also told that the reports from the office of the Prime Minister was also given a copy of their findings. From Finance Department, I wanted a second opinion on the report that came to my office.

Since, taking office when we formed this Government last year. I've asked my Secretary to get a more expert opinion on the report that is available at Finance Department. Then we can have a more conclusive findings and I can make it available to this Floor. The idea is not just bringing one report to the Floor from Finance Department but getting someone more competent, especially in the field of Forensic IT or IT specialist to be able to track this type of malware attack and also identify individuals, organizations or corporate entities, who are responsible for such an attack on our systems. This would require a specialized company to come on board and give us the second opinion which I can provide to Parliament, Cabinet and for the interest of the general public to know what actually happened.

Through our own investigation at the same time a second opinion from a more specialist and this direction has already gone to my department and we are working on it. I assure the Governors, Members on this Floor and the general public that in less than four months as soon as that report is made available by that independent IT company, I will provide to this Floor the report.

I thank the Governor for asking such a question so I can be able to respond on where we are from the malware attack since, it was affecting us last year.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Sir PETER IPATAS – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to direct my questions to the honourable Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, I just want to say that we especially the governors, when we left the PNC-led government, like all members of the Parliament, we had our own reasons. One of the fundamental reasons why the governors left the then PNC government was to see provincial governments be accorded the respect as enshrined in the *Constitution*.

The *Constitution* specifically talks about the three levels of governments. This is the fourth year we are in as government led by the Prime Minister. I want to know when this specific demarcation of powers and responsibilities are going to be sorted out.

We have many issues in this country and one of the issues that we have is not following the laws of this country. The provincial governments are there by law. We are the second level of government.

03/03

For the last four to eight years, the provincial governments are losing their mandated roles. When we moved over from PNC, we wanted to be respected and to regain our mandate.

Can the Prime Minister tell the nation his plans? In the last PNC Government, they devolved powers and named three new provinces.

Since then, it was all lies. We are mandated to lead our provinces as leaders. We will not be quietly sitting here, as our mandate is being robbed. A lot of governors left because of the tension that DDA was getting. This is not against Open members.

Mr Speaker, who is running this country? The country is supposed to be led by the Open members. They are supposed to be in committees. This Parliament is supposed to be busy during parliamentary recess, but there is no action here. Open members must concentrate on providing leadership at the national-level, and leave the provinces to the mandated governors. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Governor of Enga, what is your question, that you want the Prime Minister to answer?

Powers Of Provincial Government

Sir PETER IPATAS – I ask the Prime Minister to inform us, if there is going to be a devolution of powers or not, in making sure that we effectively perform the duties as allowed by the *Constitution* of this country?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Speaker, and a Happy New Year to you. Thank you for your presence in the Chair for the first time, this year. Let me appreciate the Governor of Enga for his important question.

I agree wholeheartedly with him, that the provincial government system is an important system of government. Lest we forget, it was a PANGU Party policy in the 1970s that set up the provincial government system in our country.

I stand here, not to be the first PANGU Party leading government to remove the power of our provincial government systems. I am a firm believer that the sub-national government level is a strong corner post in all parts of our country, that houses what we have today, our sovereignty.

We have seen in the past, an element of destabilising the structure that has been detrimental to our country. None can be clearer than our current legacy of Bougainville Provincial Government, that we are trying to get over with in the new arrangements with the people of Bougainville.

Mr Speaker, let me assure Governor Peter Ipatas, and all other governors, that the government that I lead, has not been working to undermine our provincial governments. In fact, we have been trying our very best to empower, work and strengthen our provincial governments.

Mr Speaker, as a reference made to the autonomy conversations, I want to inform this House, that the previous governments' conversations about autonomy was made in a policy vacuum. There was no clear definition of what autonomy entails.

As we arrived on board, my discussions with East New Britain, New Ireland and Enga provincial government; the three provincial governments that were designated to have a greater autonomy. My conversations were, you cannot talk about functional autonomy without economic empowerment.

What is the relevance of functional autonomy, when you are still dependent on Waigani to support those functions? We must merge the functional autonomy with an equal fund

raising ability at the provincial level to ensure that you sustain those functions that are autonomous to your province.

04/03

Those were the key issues we attempted to meet our governors and that they would have noted the work that was done by our provincial and local level government and the work that was done by the central government on clearer views on decentralisation.

We have not concluded this because the governor's council felt that the decentralization work that was done did not fully embrace on our conversations on empowering provincial governments. That work is still continuing and I will inform all governors soon to reconvene so that we look into what exactly are the issues of decentralisation and empowerment needed at the provincial level.

One thing that we agreed to and in fact the party that I lead is a strong proponent of the provincial government system. Going forward 48 years on we need to address the system in a better way. And that the systems we establish do not become an impediment for proper delivery of services to our people, while becoming a well-oiled public service machinery and a government structure and system that is delivering to the expectations of our people.

It will be incumbent on all of us, the National Government and the provincial governments to convene and look into the issues of decentralization, and for the governors to come up with a clearer view of what entails autonomy and decentralisation. Not all is as bad as it may seem. The *Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Governments* is a superior law to all other subsidiary laws that administer the functions of service delivery in our country.

Mr Speaker, the governors have a superior power, even much higher than the DDAs who are operating the *District Development Authority Act*. And so, all governors, you have a higher power and your selection of administrator comes through a process and you play a key role inside and under the *Organic Law or Provincial and Local Level Government*. You have the freedom to execute your plans in the provinces without Waigani interfering. I believe for the past three years there weren't any friction with Waigani as we were working in congruent with issues in your province.

As we go forward and for further clarity in the tit-for-tat debate with DDAs, clearly in terms of functional alignment needs to be expound and expended further and we can come up with clear definitions of DDA and provincial governments.

In conclusion, I want to say here that the DDA is not a government, it is a delivery mechanism set to deliver to our districts and should be working closely with the provincial

governments. If there are any issues let us attend to this as I do not want to bring PNG beyond 2025 with those structural impediments.

Off-Grid Power Supply

Sir PUKA TEMU - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to ask a question to the Minister for Petroleum and Energy. The Party that I represent; Our Development Party, its principle policy is 'Power to the People.' Literally the party recognizes that the country or communities, wherever they may be located must have access to electricity. This is because we as a party believe that electricity positively impacts on our lives, improves health, businesses and our livelihood.

However, with the continuous power outages and low electricity density in the city, can the Minister for State owned Enterprises inform us of the actual coverage of electricity of the entire country?

05/03

My view is that, less than 30 per cent of our people are covered by electricity. Therefore, the commitment made before our nation hosted the APEC meeting was that by 2030, 70 per cent of our people should at least have access to electricity.

Mr Speaker, you and I know that covering the country with main power grid has been wanting for a long time. For example, my little Abau District is not far from Port Moresby and the main power grid stops at Kwikila and it has stopped there for 47 years and I'm still waiting.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, what is the solution?

Mr Don Polye – Point of Order! Mr Speaker, those are very good questions but electricity issues are under the Minister for State Enterprises, Honourable William Duma, but he has referred to the Minister for Petroleum and Energy. There is a confusion so can that be clarified?

Sir PUKA TEMU – Mr Speaker, I am right to choose the responsible Minister. The Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and Sports must listen to the question to understand why I have chosen the Minister for Petroleum and Energy.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and Sports, the Honourable Member for Abau has directed his question to the Minister for Petroleum and Energy and it is in order because power is energy. So, Honourable Member, you can ask your question to the Honourable Minister.

Sir PUKA TEMU – Thank you, Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and Sports. My question is not related to the electrification under the SOEs, but it is on the off grid, small power systems in the country.

For Abau District, I have waited for 47 years to bring the main grid. I think, it will take another 50 years for Abau to have electrification. Therefore, the nation should seriously look at off-grid electrification or small power system in remote parts of our country like what the Catholic mission has been doing with small hydro schemes in their church run organisations throughout the country.

Therefore, being the Minister responsible for the National Energy Authority (NEA), I understand that this falls under the ambit of that area. I also understand that the United Nations Development Program has been supporting, through our government's request, the NEA in particular to relook at the regulations of power systems in this country.

Mr Speaker, I am very keen on the progress of the off-grid small power systems in this country. I understand that the National Energy Authority is looking at the development of the regulations of the off grids systems in this country. How far have those regulations being progressed? Will it be coming to the National Executive Council for clearance so that His Excellency, the Governor-General, can clear it because without the regulations, this enormous space for off grid electrification will not be controlled. We need a regulation to be in place so that those who want to provide off grid can use the regulation to guide them on how much voltage they should agree with the communities or the DDAs who is going to responsible, what are the dispute resolution issues with all the regulations.

Mr Speaker, I have negotiated with the UNDP and it has nominated Kupiano to be the trial for the off grid system but they cannot start without the availability of the regulations.

Therefore, can the Minister bring the progress of the regulations to Cabinet? If you don't have the copy, I think I have forwarded a copy to the Chairman of the NEA so that we can move this together because I want the off-grid systems to be offered to our country because the main grid will never reach the isolated parts of our country.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

06/03

Mr KERENGA KUA – Thank you Mr Speaker, for the important question from the Honourable member for Abau. Rural electrification is a very important part of the government work and activities. To get straight to the question he asked about whether or not our regulations for doing work in off grid areas have been prepared, I want to assure the Member that just of yesterday I communicated with the Managing Director for National Energy Authority and he has assured me that a very substantial amount of work has already been done. So, I expect that within the next two months or so. It should be finalized and we should be able to bring it to Cabinet for approval before its signed off by the Governor- General.

So, a lot of work has been put into it already and I must point out that the National Energy Authority, was created just two years ago. Only last year we appointed the Managing Director and the systems and procedures are being progressively established but this off-grid and set of regulations for the provision of off-grid power supply is not there and donor agencies like the UNDP and even those people who made commitment to supply us with a rural electrification in the 2018 APEC meeting are also keen to get into that area but all of them are waiting for a regulatory frame work which they could then follow to establish or get into the area off grid to provide power.

I've spoken to the representative of the United States Government here in Port Moresby and I'm assured that this Abau project is one of the pilot projects. They are waiting for the regulations to be prepared. I've got an appointment to meet with that representative next week when this Parliament adjourns and we will crystalize our respective position so that any donor agencies or in Government who wants to help in that area can proceed, but the regulations are important and we are putting every answers to it and I want to assure the Member and the Parliament that we should have it ready in the next couple of months.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Fix PNG Power Issues

Mr ALLAN BIRD – Thank you Mr Speaker. My question is also related to what was asked by the good member for Abau but it's directed to the Minister for State Enterprise.

Again, it's in relation to power and let me rephrase the question by saying that over the last two decades successive governments and Ministers have actually failed to rectify the challenges in power in all our towns and our cities. And one of the reasons why many of us were keen to change government in the last parliament was to try to fix some of these issues

and power being one of the more important ones. Now it's gotten to a stage where our people actually make jokes about the lack of power.

We have come to accept that power blackouts are normal in our country and that it is now are part of our lives. Everyone is buying generators, there's no improvement in terms of the regulations that govern whether someone has a generator, people using solar panels or other renewables. We basically have no regulations to govern all these things. Before it becomes an even bigger joke, I want to ask these questions to the Minister.

(1) What is really the issue in terms of all these continuous blackouts? Is it the generation? Is it the transmission? Is it incompetent management? Is it a lack of capitalization? What is it?

Please outline to the House and to the people of Papua New Guinea. The reason I asked the question is that, in the provinces the governors get blamed when there's no power. We get blamed when there's no water. We get blamed when, even the police are not working. Things that are completely outside our responsibility.

(2) Why have we been unable to fix these problems of successive governments and successive Ministers?

If we can identify the problem, surely it shouldn't take 25 years to fix it or in our case it shouldn't take two governments. We should be able to fix it in this government. It should take us a very clear outline timeline to fix this thing.

(3) When can the rent payers of Papua New Guinea expect it to be fixed?

07/03

(4) Is the Minister able to give this House and the people of Papua New Guinea a definite timeline when these issues will be fixed once and for all so that we don't continue to joke about the fact that our country is the 'blackout capital' of the world. Can the Minister post these range of suggested improvements in the newspapers so that all the people of Papua New Guinea can be informed?

(5) Finally, why doesn't the PNG Power hotline work? Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr WILLIAM DUMA – I would like to thank the good Governor of East Sepik for his very important questions. I would like to start by answering the last question in relation to the phone hotline.

We do have a hotline and it is supposed to be manned by people who are paid every fortnight. For some reason, there is no one that mans the hotline. It is basically to do with

competence and the ability of our people. Talking about mediocre performance, incompetent people is an issue that you find everywhere not only in PNG Power but even in departments everywhere in this country and I have raised this issue time and time again as Minister but for some reason things don't work. So, this is an ongoing issue that we all have to keep our people on their toes to manage it. I admit that it is an ongoing issue just like all the other hotlines that we have. Those issues are ongoing and we are still trying to get our heads around this one and I admit that it is an issue that has been of concern to me as Minister responsible.

Mr Speaker, there are combinations of reasons why our company, PNG Power, is in the situation that is in now. Firstly, it is a legacy issue which has taken more than twenty years for this company to get to where it is. I have been Minister for more than three years and I know the problems. I can only admit there is a combination of factors that has led to the situation the company is in now. Firstly, dealing with the incompetency of the people that are employed with PNG Power. Secondly, dealing with the aging infrastructure that we have and thirdly, dealing with the lack of appropriate attention by numerous governments over, more than twenty years.

But one thing that we have done is when we started engaging a company called Codamenta some years ago, they were able to establish the root cause of the situation PNG Power is in. I admit that there is a lot of work that needs to be done. There are number of factors which are equally important, the aging infrastructure plus the financial performance of the company itself plus the lack of finance to be able to import and bring in updated machinery which can be able to provide uninterrupted power to our various consumers right throughout the country.

All of these factors have been identified. We know where the problem is and I must take this opportunity to thank and commend our Prime Minister who is also much aware of the problems and he has given support to the ministry and KCH in terms of having access to finance from ADB. We are able to attract finance and we know what can be done. It will not take two months to fix this problem, we have already identified the root cause of our problems. There are too many but the three most important ones especially incompetency of our employees, those will be attended to.

Mr Speaker, I must admit I have been very overactive in trying this situation to a closure but at the same time bearing in mind the fact that when a minister intervenes every day he can be accused of political interference and there is a fine balancing so we have to be careful. We have now been able to source some funds to identify the root causes and we have started work and starting December we have seen some gradual improvement.

In the case of lack of power to other areas starting with East Sepik Province the good governor has been reminding me so many times and I have tried my best to work with him on these ongoing issues. Plans have been made to purchase gensets for areas that we have identified. Some gensets are now on the way and some are about to be purchased. We are not sitting back we have identified the problems

08/03

I assure you in the next couple of months you will see gradual improvements in PNG Power. We will slowly turn this country around and before the end of the year it will be a company that many of us will be proud of.

Mr Speaker, we have now identified all the problems and I can confidently assure this House that we will be able to turn this power company around very soon.

Wau-Bulolo Highway Rehabilitation

Mr MARSH NARAWEC – Mr Speaker, I thank you for recognising the people of Wau-Waria. On behalf of my people, let me extend their New Year greetings to you, the Prime Minister, his deputy, the Opposition Leader, all the ministers and members of this Parliament.

My question is directed to the Minister for Works and Highway, the Member representing the good people of Telefomin, Honourable Solan Mirisim. This is in relation to the Wau-Bulolo Highway.

Mr Speaker, Wau- Bulolo Highway is the oldest highway in this country. It is a national highway and starts at 9 mile in the Huon Gulf District, Morobe Province, and ends in Wau town in the new Wau-Waria District.

It was built by our good neighbours, the Australians, during World War 2, and is almost 70 years old. It has served this country before independence, during independence and continues to serve the country up to today. It contributes to the economy of this country only second to the Highlands Highway.

Mr Speaker, in June 2021, our good Prime Minister and the late Honourable Sam Basil went to Wau town and launched the Wau -Bulolo Rehabilitation Program under the AusAID funding.

However, ironically, the program will start at 9 mile in Huon Gulf and will end at Pinetop which is located in Bulolo. But this project should continue all the way to Wau town.

Mr Speaker, Wau town has contributed so much to this country since the early 1920s’.

Can the Minister tell my people as to why we have been totally neglected in this road rehabilitation program?

Mr SOLAN MIRISIM – Mr Speaker, I thank the good Member for his question and on behalf of my people let me also extend my warm New Year greetings to the people of Wau-Waria through their Member.

Mr Speaker, the rehabilitation program is an AusAID-funded program which our national government counter funded and there was a slight delay which didn't allow the program to eventuate until just last year before the National General Elections. Two contractors were awarded to carry out works on this program. One contractor started from the 9 mile turn-off through to Mumeng and the other contractor was to carry on from there and stop at Wau. However, some re-scoping had to be done on this highway. Some work has already been done beginning from 9 mile. The counterpart funding from Australia will come in once the work has started. The money we have available is used to fund various contracts.

09/03

That's the progress on roadworks in the area. The road is quite lengthy with two contractors working at the moment however, once works begin from Bulolo to Wau, we will put out a tender for another contractor for this section of the road. So this year, under Connect PNG which has counterpart funding, I would like to reassure the Member and the people of Wau Waria that this year roadworks will begin from Bulolo all the way to Wau.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Alluvial Mining Law

Mr SAM BASIL JNR – Thank you Mr. Speaker. I will go straight to my short and sharp question and it is directed to the Minister for Mining. This is in regard to the need to enact the Alluvial Mining Law, particularly on protecting the landowner rights, regarding alluvial mining.

Mr. Speaker, through you, if the Mining Department hasn't started work on amending the Mining Act, does it have any plans to maybe push for an alluvial mining act, one which will protect landowner rights over other citizens? At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we would like to protect the landowners. Thank you.

Sir ANO PALA – Thank you Member for Bulolo for that important question. At present we have changed, or made appropriate changes to the law that protect the landowners. Under the law now, only landowners can operate alluvial gold mining. That is the law. But there are times where exploration licenses have been issued to others over those alluvial operations. I agree that some adjustments need to be made because only nationals can do alluvial gold mining. And that is the law. But unfortunately, the current law is that somebody can get an exploration license over the area in which you have the legal right to operate alluvial mining. And that is the area that we are trying to sort out.

To answer the Member's question, we are now in the process of introducing a mining amendment act to address the sensitive areas or clarify areas in this field of alluvial gold mining and exploration activities. So we have a situation where you could be doing alluvial mining on your land and then all of a sudden, somebody can come along and apply for mining license over your land. And I think that's the area we are trying to clear up by way of law so that when you have alluvial mining license on your own land, because you're a customary landowner, then you should also have your own mining license as well.

But these were done before my time and my department is fully aware of this area of conflict or possible conflict and they are trying to fine-tune the law so that any area of conflicts we have with regards to the rights of alluvial gold miner and the rights of an exploration license holder, we can adjust those areas

10/03

We can adjust those areas so that we don't have conflict.

The Member's question is very important and relevant. One of the most important subject matters to be addressed in the coming Mining Amendment Act. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Education – Management Policy

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE – My question is to the Minister for Education, and the Minister for Science, Research, Technology, Minister for Lands and the Minister for Community Development to take note.

When presenting the annual departmental report for 2021 during the last Parliament sitting in 2022, the Minister made mention of the progress of phasing out the Outcome Based

Education and replacing it with the Standard Based Curriculum and other positive interventions.

One of such interventions is the announcement that the Government of PNG under the Marape-Rosso government will relaunch the management policy to address discipline and violence and focus on well-being of students and teachers.

Mr Speaker, it is enlightening to hear this announcement from the Education Department, especially in this time where we are faced with challenges in increasing social disorder leading to lack of discipline and moral values in our schools from early childhood to secondary schools and our tertiary institutions.

Mr Speaker, the re-introduction of the behavioural management policy will restore confidence in our schools as we embark on making our schools credible respectful and highly valued in trading quality education for the present and future generation.

Mr Speaker, my questions are;

(1) Can the Minister provide for our information the plans or strategies they will use implement this particular important policy so that it will be sustainable with the aim to build a culture of behavioural change in our schools?

We have seen a lot of school properties destroyed due to land issues.

(2) Can the Department of Education in consultation with the Department of Lands, National Lands Commission and Provincial Lands conduct assessments and establish titles where all primary schools, secondary schools, tertiary institutions are located in the country so corrective measures are in place as part of behavioural management policy to create secure learning environment for our school children.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr JIMMY UGURO – Thank you, Mr Speaker and thank you Member for Pomio for a very good question.

Yes, the department has launched a Behavioural Management Policy the beginning of last year. It was launched in one of the NCDC schools by the Governor-General to be incorporated with your curriculum and that is to do with the personal development programs in various sectors in education from elementary to our schools.

The behaviour and attitude of our students in our schools are very important and it is the different agencies responsible while the school is taking the lead in providing the environment to guide, help and shape the development of our children in the classrooms. We also requested our churches because that policy applies to all stakeholders; churches,

community leaders and business partners who also come in to help educate and develop our students while they are at an early age at the schools.

MOTION OF CONCURRENCE

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform Parliament that the Prime Minister of Australia Honourable Anthony Albanese, MP, is in the precincts of Parliament.

Motion – The question is that the motion be agreed to – agreed to.

With the concurrence of all the honourable Members, I invite the Prime Minister to be seated on the Floor of Parliament.

ADMISSION OF THE AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER

Sergeant- At -Arms announced the arrival of the Australian Prime Minister and took his seat on the right of the Speaker's Chair.

11/03

WELCOME SPEECH BY THE SPEAKER

Mr SPEAKER – The Prime Minister of Australia, Honourable Anthony Albanese, on behalf of the 118 Members of this Parliament, I would like to say a belated Happy New Year to you, your Parliament and the people of Australia.

I wish to on behalf of all our Members of Parliament welcome you to this Parliament. The Parliament House is a gift from Australia to this country and the people of Papua New Guinea. You are in fact the first leader to come and address this parliament. The people of Papua New Guinea are tuned into radio and television stations to hear and watch the Prime Minister of Australia address this Parliament.

We believe that your address to Parliament today will strengthen the bilateral ties between Papua New Guinea and Australia. Having said this, I now invite you Honourable

Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister of Australia to address the Papua New Guinea National Parliament and once again, welcome to our Parliament Chamber.

**ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT BY HONOURABLE ANTHONY ALBANESE MP,
PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA -**

Mr ANTHONY ALBANESE (Prime Minister of Australia) – Mr Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members, friends. Gutpela monin, olgeta. Good morning to you all, thank you for your warm and generous welcome. I am delighted to be the first Australian Prime Minister to visit Papua New Guinea since 2018.

And I am deeply, deeply honoured to be the first foreign Head of Government to address your Parliament. And what a magnificent Parliament this is. A building rich with the art and culture and tradition of Papua New Guinea's proud history and identity.

And a chamber alive with optimism for the future of this nation and the progress of your people. Australia and Papua New Guinea are the closest of neighbors, we are the greatest of friends. For thousands of years, Torres Strait Islanders and the indigenous traders of PNG shared culture and kinship, exchanging goods and ideas. That thread runs unbroken through to today: to our modern trade links, our evolving business and investment ties, our migrants and expats, our expanding fields of cultural and educational exchange - even our shared passion for Rugby League.

We are friends. We are mates. We are partners. We are equals.

We are neighbors who stand with each other and help each other in times of need. Australians will never forget the heroism and humanity of the brave souls who some eight decades ago - came from all over this country to serve and fight alongside our soldiers in defence of this land and in defence of Australia's freedom too. Or in recent times, the 100 members of Kumul Force deployed in Operation Bushfire Assist, to help Australia in the devastating Black Summer of 2019-20.

PNG was one of the very first countries to offer Australia assistance — and Kumul Force was the biggest international contingent deployed.

And on behalf of all Australians, I simply say: thank you. Tenk yu tru.

Honourable Members, over there on the table, I can see the ceremonial mace.

A gift from the Parliament and the people of Australia, to the first Papua New Guinea House of Assembly in 1964. A crowned symbol of authority that dates back centuries, to the

mother of parliaments in Westminster. And yet entwined with the gold leaf and silver plate at the core of your mace, is something unique. A polished stone ball, representing the head of a traditional club. There is a profound truth bound up in that.

12/03

Australia gave your first Assembly a symbol of our support and respect and affection. A demonstration of the precious value we place on our countries' deep and lasting friendship. And a token of gratitude for the extraordinary service your people gave to ours, in the darkest days of the Second World War. But the true weight, the real power and the great strength at the heart of that democratic symbol comes from Papua New Guinea. It comes from you: your people, your culture, your courage, your talent and intellect and ambition.

That was the truth at the core of the movement to independence, now nearly half a century ago. Because independence was not Australia's gift to give, it was the people of Papua New Guinea's right to assert, it was your opportunity to seize.

In this land of extraordinary contrasts and variety in landscapes and traditions and languages, people united around a deep faith in democracy and a powerful commitment to family and community and care for their neighbours.

Independence was-as my great predecessor Gough Whitlam said on that day of celebration in 1975-'an idea whose time had come'. And it arrived not as a contested act of revolution but rather as a considered statement of national maturity, of national unity and also a national ambition for PNG to serve as a leader in this region.

As Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare said, at the first South Pacific Forum that PNG attended as a member state: "We are not here to rock the boat, but to add another in order that our voyage to that glorious destination may be reached". Nearly half a century later, we are still on that voyage, together. And yes, there have been rough seas and tough times. But our friendship has held true. And, now, on the horizon, a world of opportunity awaits us. Because Australia and Papua New Guinea are bound not just by a shared past and a shared border but by a common determination to shape our own futures. To seize the opportunities of this moment, in this region.

This can be a decisive decade for peace, prosperity, unity and security in the Indo-Pacific. As two big Pacific Ocean states, Australia and PNG must work as equals with our fellow Pacific states to build a stronger, safer, more secure region. All of us have a part to play in realising that vision. And tied in with that, all of us who serve as parliamentarians have a unique opportunity and a particular responsibility to defend the democracy in which we serve.

And we fulfil that duty best by demonstrating the value of this place and the ideals it is built on. By proving that the system we belong to has the power to change people's lives for the better. This begins with ensuring that every girl and boy has the right to grow up happy and safe and with the opportunity to get a great education.

The government I lead is committed to strengthening Australia's education partnership with PNG. Working with you on the important priorities you've identified: including the early years and vocational education and training. And making sure that equality for women and girls goes far beyond the opportunity to attend school.

We know every nation can do better and do more to achieve this; from greater economic empowerment, to preventing domestic and family violence, to achieving equality in representation.

13/03

I am proud to lead the first Australian Government in 122 years where the majority of our members are women.

And I want to congratulate the two new women members elected to this place, you are representatives and you are trail blazers and I hope you inspire a new generation of women and girls to serve their country and their democracy.

Equality for women is fair, it is right and it is a powerful economic reform. It boosts productivity participation and drives growth, because it means drawing on the talent and an initiative and enterprise of the whole population, not just half of it.

Friends, education is a mighty weapon against disadvantage and equality is a powerful lever for economic growth.

But recent years have provided the world with a vivid reminder that healthy economies depend-above all-on healthy people.

Australia will continue to provide support to PNG's health priorities, including in infectious diseases such as TB, HIV, child maternal health and malaria.

And we are proud that the Australian-funded hospital Angau was completed last year in Lae.

This new facility will serve an area that is home to over one million people and make a major contribution to boosting access to healthcare in PNG.

Prime Minister Marape, as you know it was a Pangu Government and an Australian Labour Government that worked together to usher in a new era for Papua New Guinea half a century ago.

In 2023, I want our two governments to work together to unlock a new generation of prosperity for your nation. To boost our two-way trade in everything from coffee and cocoa to fisheries and tourism. And to bolster the significant direct investment made here by the Australian private sector in PNG which already stands at some \$24 billion. More than we invest in India, more than we invest in Indonesia and more than we invest in Malaysia, right here in Papua New Guinea.

I understand PNG is eager to expand your exports of more processed goods and varied agricultural products and I see these areas where the Australian business communities can play a key role.

Our Government also stands ready to assist PNG to improve your bio security regime to enable your farmers and producers to access international markets.

And as the world looks to a more sustainable model for growth, PNG has a tremendous opportunity to expand in your green economy.

I know a number of Australia companies are keen to explore what can be done in this area including in hydro and hydrogen production for example.

Together, I am confident that we can ensure that the rich natural resources of Papua New Guinea are made to deliver good jobs, lasting investment and sustainable development for your nation.

But our friendship is deeper than trade and our partnership in cooperation and engagement should reach beyond it.

Infrastructure is a long standing policy passion of mine and I am proud that Australia is working with PNG to deliver an ambitious program of nation building projects.

Upgrading ports to create jobs and clear away bottlenecks as well as opening the door for developing export industries.

Building and maintaining a better road network to make it easier for farmers to get their products to market and to ensure that communities have more reliable access to good service.

And here on the threshold of the biggest markets and the fastest growing economies in the world in human history, digital and communications infrastructure is every bit as vital as roads and ports.

This is why Australia built the Coral Sea cable and is helping to build a productive and competitive telecommunications market for PNG.

14/03

It's important and right that the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific has a strong pipeline of projects here in PNG, and I look forward to following their progress and celebrating their completion.

Friends, in the years ahead, Australia and Papua New Guinea have a chance to honour our shared history of service in the cause of peace, by adding to it.

Deepening our defence ties and enhancing our national security co-operation and achieving a swift conclusion to negotiations on a Bilateral Security Treaty. A treaty that will underpin our work together to address PNG's priority needs including law and order challenges, strengthening the justice system and rule of law.

A treaty based on deep trust and a treaty that builds on the family-first approach to regional security. An example to others and an investment in the future of our partnership.

In this same spirit of regionalism, we are expanding opportunities for PNG citizens to travel and work in Australia through the Working Holiday Visa, the Pacific Engagement Visa and in particular, the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme.

Australian farmers and producers benefit from the expertise and industry of your people. Just as importantly, the people of PNG earn good wages and develop new skills that they can use to support their families, educate their children and invest in opportunities that will deliver further prosperity for themselves and PNG.

And Prime Minister Marape, my government backs your ambition to significantly increase the number of PNG workers who take part in this program in Australia and contribute to the future prosperity of both our nations.

Honourable Members, all of you appreciate that our region is on the frontline of the global fight against climate change. Our Pacific neighbours are counting on PNG and Australia to support international co-operation, to show leadership and to take action.

There is not a moment to waste. It is up to our generation to protect the precious and unique natural environment of our rainforests, reefs and coasts to build and plan our infrastructure so our communities are more resilient and better prepared for natural disasters.

It is the responsibility of our generation to ensure our farmers and producers do not suffer irreversible damage to their land and livelihoods. It is the great opportunity of our generation to grasp the transformative economic benefits of clean energy technology.

All of which is why I'm very pleased that PNG will be joining the Indo-Pacific Carbon Offsets Scheme.

Honourable Members, when Prime Minister Marape and I watched the State of Origin together in Suva last year, he said there are only three days your country stops. Game 1, Game 2 and Game 3. That's something I think a lot of Australians can relate to. And it was great to see so many people getting off the Air Niugini flights in Brisbane to support the talent of the Kumuls and the Orchids in the Prime Minister's XIII matches.

And today I affirm my view that I want to see a PNG-based, Pacific Islander team compete in the National Rugby League competition. Whether it is rugby league, or cricket with the Barras and the Lewas, or the work being done here by the AFL.

Sport is such a genuine and powerful way of building strong and lasting ties between our peoples, at a code and club and community and family level. And the same is true for education and art and cultural exchange.

My government will continue to support programs that deepen understanding and strengthen connections between Australians and the people of Papua New Guinea. Because at the heart of our two nations' friendship is that sense of respect and connection between equals.

Honourable Members, tomorrow, I will travel to Wewak to pay my respects at the resting place of Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare.

15/03

Before I left for this visit, I was shown a photo taken in 1974 at an event in my home town of Sydney.

The Grand Chief holding onto part of a two-pronged spear which he's just broken across his knee, into two pieces. One was given to Gough Whitlam, the other to the great Motuan leader, Oala Oala Rarua of Pari village.

This gesture was a symbol of peace, but also the signifier of a pact, of a promise between two leaders.

A new path of friendship, mateship and common accord. A bond between equals. I am proud to say today that Australia is determined to continue to honour that promise. We stand with you. We hold true.

Our two nations are bound together, now let us build together. A future of peace, prosperity and opportunity for all.

Thank you very much, everyone, see you again.

**RESPONSE TO ADDRESS, BY HONOURABLE JAMES MARAPE, MP AND
PRIME MINISTER OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

Mr JAMES MARAPE (Tari-Pori – Prime Minister) – Mr Speaker, let me firstly, appreciate and thank you and all members of Parliament on both sides for allowing and welcoming my good friend and Australian Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Anthony Albanese who has just address our ppeople’s National Parliament.

I want to thank Prime Minister Albanese and his entire delegation for finding time to firstly to visit Papua New Guinea. The address to our people's House, the Parliament is indeed historic and entrenches the peculiar shared history of our two nations.

Mr Speaker, in case young Papua New Guineans and Australians forget; we were a territory under Australian sovereignty before 1975. This time 50 years ago, we were all Australians, and the Australian Labor Party was in government and then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam supported the fathers of our country Papua New Guinea led by non-other than Sir Michael Somare and hence Nationhood was granted.

And so, it is again in 2023 that the two parties; the great Australian Labor Party and the Pangu Party, 48 years later meet to consolidate our common bond and consider our path for the future as a family nation.

Mr Speaker, for the first time, an Australian Prime Minister makes a warm reassuring statement in our National Parliament, indicating that both nations are equal development partners and will grow side by side going on into the future.

Mr Speaker, I noted that Prime Minister Albanese recognizes our shared past and also identifies most, if not all of our contemporary issues in our bilateral relationship that both countries must work on for the betterment of our two people.

16/03

Mr Speaker, I would like to inform you and this Parliament that this afternoon our bilateral meeting will take place discussing all issues pertaining to how we want our relationship with Australia to be fine-tuned. Issues like immigration and visa, education, work opportunities, commerce, trade and investments, including export of our products, sport, development including NRL bid, access to continuous soft credit and grant facilities from Australia facilities that are available closure to home. Support for law and justice sector including police, military exchanges, public service work exchanges, and of course the

alignment of Australian aid programs to our country's development priorities will be amongst those issues that we will discuss in our meeting.

Mr Speaker, I don't want this historic address to our People's House to be wasted. This is a bilateral milestone between Australia and PNG. In the face of the nation's 50th Independence Anniversary coming up in 2025.

My friend the Australian Prime Minister is here in our Parliament listening and I want to assure you, Mr Speaker, we shall prosper our national development agenda with Australia so Papua New Guinea becomes better, stronger and safer in all senses, especially from economic independent perspective of our present generational leaders.

As it was Australian Labour Party and Whitlam in 1973 to 1975 that allowed Papua New Guinea, Pangu Party and Somare to drive into political independence. So, must it be Australia today, Labour Party today and Albanese of 2023 to assist Papua New Guinea, assist Pangu Party and my generational leaders to drive PNG into the economic independence destination we so sought.

Mr Speaker, you and me have agreed many times that a nation claiming political independence without economic strength is a weak nation. And in the focus for economic gain Papua New Guinea and Australia is operating presently under the Comprehensive Strategic Economic Partnership agreement we signed with my Government and the previous Morrison Government in 2020.

Today's coming of the Prime Minister Albanese, has a touch of bettering the heights we have reached with Australia in the last three years. An economically independent Papua New Guinea is a better, a stronger and safer Papua New Guinea. A better, stronger and safer PNG is a better, stronger and safer Australia and the Indo Pacific region. One cannot talk about Indo Pacific, without progressing the Papua New Guinea agenda, because we are right in the heart and the center of this confluence. The Indo-Pacific confluence. In order for PNG to participate in a safer Indo-Pacific region, Papua New Guinea herself must be stronger economically.

Papua New Guinea must be a strong economic nation. So, Mr. Speaker, our focus on ramping up trade, business free flow of exports and our people to Australia will be our main issue of discussions with the Australian Leadership which we are so privileged to have today. This is not just a social conversation, it is deep economic strategy of our nation.

To my brother Prime Minister Albanese, let me place on Hansard my people and my great appreciation of you taking the trip to PNG and thus consolidating our government to government relationships. Rather for me, more importantly, the people to people relationship

must be consolidated. Even to greater the business to business must be consolidated. My heart is warmed, hearing from your statement that you are in total embrace of the key policy initiatives of this Pangu Government, especially in the face of strengthening the economic gains of my country and I sincerely look forward to a meeting later today.

Mr Speaker, let me pass, through Prime Minister Albanese, our people's appreciation and thank you to all help, all manners of help by the Australian people, Australian governments and Australian Leaders past and present, rendered to our country in the last 48 years past. And more so, recently during the covid -19 pandemic. The help from Australia assisted our recovery efforts and it would be unfair of me not to place our appreciation in this moment when you are with us in our people's house.

17/03

Australia is not just a bilateral partner nation but a parent nation to us for she birthed us in 1975. And since then, PNG is littered with many imprints of assistances like aids, grants, infrastructure developments, budget supports, credit finance accessing, human resource development, foreign direct investments, Christian church assistances et cetera, to name a few.

Australian has been the biggest helper to our national development endeavors and I want to say a hearty thank you. And may I say, my generation of leaders do not take Australia for granted and we look forward to work with your leadership and your country for mutual benefit of both countries going into the future.

In the last three years, we have started massive reform work based on our focus to take back PNG on the road to full economic independence as our father's generation envisioned in 1975. These reforms include fighting corruption head on by us setting up Independent Commission Against Corruption, setting up Sovereign Wealth Fund, reforming our public service and state-owned enterprises by strictly adhering to merit-based appointments.

Economically, we are focused on fiscal consolidation and will be pursuing aggressive debt reduction once we come out of the present global economic turbulences caused by Covid-19 and the Russian-Ukrainian war, and we spreading development efforts to all parts of our country including the special autonomous region of Bougainville. Above are some domestic reforms we doing so Mr Prime Minister, be rest assured, that all help Australia is rendering PNG is in good safe hands.

Mr Speaker, on your behalf I want to wish our good friend and brother and the Prime Minister of Australia, the Right Honourable Anthony Albanese and his delegation a pleasant stay and a safe journey to Wewak East Sepik Province to pay respect to the first Prime Minister

of Papua New Guinea, the Great Grand Chief Sir Micheal Thomas Somare, a gesture we shall not forget. On this note, I conclude, by wishing you and your official delegation a very successful visit and safe travels back home to Australia. May God Tadaakali Wape or Yesu bless you always!

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER- Honourable Members, I wish to inform you that the Honourable Anthony Albanese, the Prime Minister of Australia will take his leave now.

Mr RAINBO PAITA- Thank you, I would like to add on to what the Prime Minister has said, with that I would like to say thank you to you and the Prime Minister and to all our MPs for welcoming the Prime Minister of Australia to visit and address this Parliament. With that I would like to adjourn Parliament to 10 am tomorrow morning.

Mr SPEAKER – Before I entertain your move to adjourn Parliament, I would like to clarify here that a lot of times you don't see me in the Speaker's Chair. This Chair does not belong to the Member for Manus. This Chair is for the people of Papua New Guinea. Anything can happen to the occupant of this Chair.

As we have discussed in the succession plan, I as the Speaker, have given opportunity to the Assistant Speaker and Deputy Speaker to be in the Chamber. We never know what tomorrow may be like and should there be any changes of any kind, there are persons who are already groomed to take the Chair.

18/03

Mr SPEAKER – When there is something wrong or if anything happens to me tomorrow, there must be someone around to take this Chair. I also want to inform our daily newspapers like *Post-Courier* that most of the time it publishes that the Speaker is absent without actually confirming with the Speaker's office. They may have published it just for the People of Manus to see it, but you must know that the Speaker doesn't have any seat on this Floor. The only seat the Speaker has is this Chair and therefore I am always in the office doing other jobs. So, when Speaker is not in the Chair it doesn't mean I am absent. I give opportunity to my deputy and assistant speakers to take the Chair so that they can gain some experiences.

Mr Douglas Tomuriesa – Point of Order! There was a very important question raised by one of the Members of Parliament to the Education Minister and while he was answering the question, there was an interruption so can you make a ruling that you will give him the opportunity tomorrow to continue answer the question?

Mr SPEAKER – Your Point of Order is in order. The Education Minister will answer the question when we meet again tomorrow.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 11:45 a.m.