

FOURTH DAY

Friday 17 March 2023

DRAFT HANSARD

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

CORRECTIONS TO DAILY HANSARD

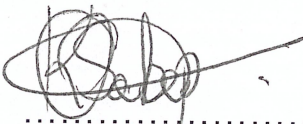
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KENNETH SEBEPMIN

Acting Principal Parliamentary Reporter

FOURTH DAY

Friday, 17 March 2023

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

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

Sitting suspended.

The Acting Speaker again took the Chair at 10.43 a.m., and invited the Member for Central Bougainville, **Honourable Simon Dumarinu**, to say Prayers.

‘God the Father, we thank you for bringing us together again in this session. We ask for your Spirit and strength as you are our Creator and our Maker. You were our Creator in the beginning. In the scripture, in the *Old Testament*, you placed men to continue your creation in life and that has gone on until it became a failure. But you sent your Son, Jesus to continue to redeem and save us and that work of his has continued on until today, especially in the churches and in the leadership and in the government.

Today we pray, in this session, for our leadership in the country especially the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, ministers, members, and we also pray for the leadership in the Opposition on the other side for us together, for our intention of being here before you today. Whatever it is we share today in this Parliament, continue under your guidance and strength for us whatever business we have before us.

God the Father, we pray for the work that we are going to do and we also pray for the country and pray for those challenges before us, those areas that we need to continue to put in order, the leadership that we are in, that tasked to do especially through this important House as members through the law and the decisions and the policy laws that we make through this Parliament. So we ask for your guidance and protection through this session and may you continue to guide us. Amen’

MOTION BY LEAVE

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

Leave granted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

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

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent Notice No.28, 25, 26 Government Business, being called on forthwith.

02/04

PACIFIC INSTITUTE OF LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Joe Sungi** and read a first time.

Mr Elias Kapavore – Point of Order! Mr Acting Speaker, there's two voices coming through the microphones and its disturbing to hear.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Clerk can you check that?

Second Reading

Leave granted to move the Second Reading forthwith.

Mr JOE SUNGI (Nuku—Minister for Public Service) – I move –

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr Acting Speaker, today is an important moment for me to present on behalf of the Prime Minister and the Marape-Rosso Government, the amendment to the *Pacific Institute of Leadership and Governance Act*.

The institution was first established in 1963 as the first Papua New Guinea Administrative College before it became Papua New Guinea Institute of Public Administration under the *PNGIPA Act 1993*. Then in 2017, the Parliament had repealed the entire *PNGIPA Act 1993* and replaced it with the *Pacific Institute of Leadership and Governance Act of 2017*, which came into full effect and operation in April 2018.

In the process of implementing this legislation, the PILAG interim board and the management have encountered certain legal oversight challenges and gaps in specific provisions of the *Act* which required it to be amended or repealed.

03/04

The first impediment area of concern was to do with the transitional provisions of the *Act* that regulated the transition period from PNGIPA to PILAG, which were all achieved and not applicable at present.

Mr Acting Speaker, the other important legal and policy issue to be addressed by this amendment is the status and appointment process of the PILAG Board Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, which was not clearly defined in the principal *Act*.

The amendment provides that the Chairperson of the Board shall be the Departmental Head responsible for Personnel Management whilst the Deputy Chairperson shall be a representative from either the National Training Council (NTC) or the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST). This is to ensure that there is continuity and coordination of the government's public service training policies and the implementation and monitoring of the public service training program which is one of the national government's KRAs.

Mr Acting Speaker, the significant amendment is the change of name of the institution from the Pacific Institute of Leadership and Governance to the Somare Institute of Leadership and Governance (PILAG to SILAG). It is the Executive Government's intent and wisdom to rename this premier government training institution to portray and give prominence in commemoration of the founding father and first Prime Minister of this country.

Mr Acting Speaker, may I add that Papua New Guinea commemorated the late Sir Michael Somare's second death Anniversary on 26 February. The late Grand Chief entered the Administrative College as it used to be known in 1965, as one of its first students, and soon after that, they established the civil service. Rightfully the name makes all sense to honour the Father of this country.

Mr Acting Speaker, the only new part of this legislative amendment is to do with the establishment of the PILAG Academic Committee, its composition, and functions. The committee consists of professional academics and members representing core arms of training within the institution

NEC Decision No: NG86/2022

The decision for the amendment and the repeal of certain provisions of the *PILAG Act 2017* is to improve the efficiency of the institute to achieve its objectives and functions, as originally envisioned.

Mr Acting Speaker, the institute will have a permanent board in place after the amendment of this *Act*. The board shall exercise the power to direct the affairs of the institution with the Executive Management of the Institute.

Currently, there are some legal and policy constraints at times that affect the Interim Board from fully exercising its authority in making policy decisions to ensure that PILAG becomes a fully-fledged regulatory body for training public servants, partners, and other stakeholders.

Mr Acting Speaker, the *PILAG Act 2017* does not also define and establish a body that oversees and coordinates the academic aspects of the Institution; therefore, it has caused a vacuum.

04/04

The insertion of this new part in the bill shall establish the economic committee which shall exercise governance over the economic programs and regulations responsible for the maintenance of the standard of admission, training, research and conferment of academic awards.

Mr Acting Speaker, I am confident that this amendment will improve the institution in its functions with efficient management and leadership from the Board and its Management. Therefore, on behalf of the Marape-Rosso Government, I endorse the passing of this bill.

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE (Pomio) - Mr Acting Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition we would like to firstly, accept the amendment made to the *2023 PILAG Act* and then would like to contribute with a debate on this particular bill.

The amendment bill of *PILAG Act of 2023* is fully commendable and it is appropriate that this amendment is made in place to have a permanent board to direct the affairs of the institute and an academic committee responsible for the maintenance of the standards, training, research and conferment of academic awards. While we appreciate the amendments, I must place on records our acknowledgements and appreciation of the initial fundamentals that were set by Honorable Pila Niningi, who was then the Minister for Higher Education, Science Research and Technology in partnership with Honorable Julie Bishop, then was the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia.

The PILAG precinct is a partnership between the Government of PNG and Australia to support the development of ethical and capable public and private sector leaders in PNG public service. It is aimed at improving governance and service delivery at the national, provincial and the district level encouraging value-based decision making especially in PNG public service. I support the change of name from PILAG to Somare Institute of Leadership and Governance on behalf of the Opposition.

Mr Acting Speaker, the Grand Chief and the Father of this nation's legacy must live on through our generations, especially in the implementation of the *Vision 2050*, with the targets under the seven pillars. At self-Government in 1973, then as the Chief Minister, the late Grand Chief commissioned what commissioned the development of what became the eight aims and later renamed as the Eight-Point Plan.

The Eight-Point Plan was a statement of intent by the founding fathers of our nation who wanted to build a peaceful harmonious society as well as to empower our people. The objectives of the Eight-Point Plan was first to increase indigenous participation in the economy, secondly, equality among the ethnic groups and gender and thirdly greater attention to rural and village development and self-reliance. All of these formed the preamble of our National *Constitution*, especially the National Goals and Directive Principles. They are relevant even today, nearly 48 years after our country gained independence.

Mr Acting Speaker, I commend the Marape-Rosso Government through the Minister for Public Service for the change of name from PILAG to SILAG. In this we are implementing the Vision 2050 pillar No.1, the Human Development, Gender, Youth and People Empowerment. The Public Sector requirements also calls for all senior public servants that must hold a Master's Degree or equivalent. To convert PNG IPA to Somare School of Government as according to page 24 of the Vision, it is imperative that we maintain the institute of leadership and governance to give prominence to the agreed precinct, partnership with the Australia Public Service Commission, the DHERST, UPNG School of Business, Public Policy and DPM.

Mr Acting Speaker, this brings me to my next point on section 26 (b) on the composition of the academic committee. It says that the CEO shall be the chairperson, the director of workforce training and development, heads of academic departments of the institute, librarian and professors of the institute and the course coordinators of the institute will make up the committee.

05/04

Firstly, this is an important training institution so whoever that becomes the CEO, must hold a doctorate or PHD to leave a credibility and the standard of this institute. My view is to take on board and include the appropriate represent Master's from the DHERST and UPNG School of Business and Public Policy to the academic committee as well. We must also include the PNG Public Service Commission. They are required under section 191 of the National *Constitution* to maintain an ongoing review of state services and to make recommendations to NEC.

Our Public Service Commission must review its operations and contribute to the curriculum development and workforce standards in our country. The Pacific Leadership of Governance precinct emphasised on leadership ethics and values, and is supported by the Australian Public Service Commission.

The PNG counterparts at the moment, spend most of their time dealing with review of personal matters, which they must improve on. There is a significant need to review the operations so they align themselves to the government's priorities on the human resource development of our country.

Mr Acting Speaker, in conclusion, we thank the Government of Australia through DFAT for their on-going support. We also acknowledge the Department of Personnel Management and CEO of PILAG, and this government that met today for this particular Bill.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Motion – That the question be put – agreed to.

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

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Leave granted to move the Third Reading forthwith.

Motion (by **Mr Joe Sungi**) proposed –

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Mr DON POLYE (Kandep – Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and Sports) – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I support the Minister for Public Service in the amendment of the PILAG that is brought forthwith in observing some of the functions of that institution, and also for changing the name from PILAG to CILAG.

I welcome the articulated comments made by the Member for Pomio on this issue, and I would like to also talk about some of them. The Public Service Minister has established very clearly and competently the governance and leadership of the institution.

The governance and leadership of an institution, not only for the PILAG, but also in the other institution, in my observation, has become a very challenging and demanding issue for Papua New Guinea. I have observed in other higher learning institutions like; universities and technical colleges, institutes, teacher's colleges, nursing colleges, et cetera.

The same can be observed in SOE's and departments and so forth in standard organisations, that the governance and leadership has been one area of wanting in the country that must be addressed properly, because the overall operations of the entity or this institution relies on the leadership provided by the board or the governing council of any entity.

Mr Acting Speaker, I have observed that when the people on the board become compromised, it affects the performance and the structure of implementation of the body.

06/04

It is very important because many times we complain and we find grievances raised by the public about lack of performance, people not meeting their key targets and the objectives of the organization. You will find the quality declining and I found that it is quite common to the Higher Education sector that I am entrusted with by the good Prime Minister to look after. I find leadership and governance as a very important issue.

The two areas that I see that affects or compromises the leadership and governance are; firstly, politicization. Let me take myself as a case to illustrate the point. If I want a friend or *wantok* of mine to become the Chancellor or Vice Chancellor of the University of Papua New

Guinea and to other positions down the line, Mr Acting Speaker, if I am wrong or if I am short sighted what I would do is use the powers given under the *Higher Education Provisions Act* to push the appointment of my friends. That has really affected all of the public service machinery, especially the very important institutions like PILAG or SILAG that we are now referring to.

I would like to urge all of us that we must understand the appointments of those key people at the governance and leadership level. The board level is very key because they are the people who will determine the operations and quality output and implementation of government policy. I am very happy that the Public Service Minister has very confidently articulated on this amendment that is brought before this House that we will address and entrust confident people up there. I also know that it is the policy of the Marape-Rosso government to making sure people appointed are people with credibility and not only with political experience, but ones that will be making sure that the institutions and or state bodies are properly governed under the rule of law and manage money, operational matters and achieve quality.

The second area is quality of the academic programs. This is about the quality of the programs and academic programs offered by the institutions. In this case like, PILAG or SILAG, I heard the Member for Pomio talk about quality academic programs which Minister for Public Service also mentioned.

Mr Acting Speaker, what we are doing at the Higher Education space is, we will not register any institution, colleges or universities that do not meet the standard of registration. I am driving that quite vehemently. This standard must be the standard that meet benchmarks against some of the best business practices and academic practices in the world. When Papua New Guinea's standard is high at that level, and programs at that level being disseminated or imparted to those tutors coming in or trainees in the leadership sector or governance sector, you will find that they are at par with the international level. That means they can now manage their area of responsibilities, not with Papua New Guinean standards or cultural way, but with best businesses, companies and institutions practice of the world. They will have to meet the standard registration requirement under the Marape-Rosso government.

The other area we also looked at is the programs that the Minister for Public Service referred to that are being taught in the institutions. They must be properly accredited. Accreditation standard of international standards must be met. Mr Acting Speaker, the standard is very important because when you have somebody passing out of the colleges or the institute like the SILAG institute for instance, you will be confident that they can administer as a secretary of a department or as a MD of an SOE or a Vice Chancellor or Chancellor of an Institution in Papua New Guinea, and deliver quality output.

Mr Acting Speaker, one of the things I observed is –and let me give a medical calamity as an example without putting anybody off.

07/04

If somebody is a good doctor in hospital, the mindset and the impression is he would be the best manager of that hospital. The best specialist in one particular area cannot be the best manager of a broader scale of management or governance.

The Pacific Institute of Leadership and Governance (PILAG) is available for those who want to become CEOs of hospitals and Vice Chancellors of universities to go through this institute to qualify for that accredited and well registered courses taught at PILAG or SILAG. And not just appointing anybody because he or she has a PHD in Chemistry and we blindly offer him or her the position thinking that they will be a good Vice Chancellor.

Mr Acting Speaker, my observation is that it cannot work because he or she is not specialized in that area. I am not discrediting them but so proud of Papua New Guineans who are experts in those areas. But management, administration, governance, rule of law and following process and procedures of governance in public service in PNG is different.

Therefore, the now called, Somare Institute of Leadership and Governance (SILA), will be the right place to go to. Those who want to become managers, CEOs, MDs, Secretaries or Vice Chancellors must go to SILAG to qualify in leadership training process. And they can deploy some of this leadership techniques in all these institutes, Mr Acting Speaker.

Finally, the change from PILAG to SILAG named after the Grand Chief, Sir Michael Thomas Somare, I think is a good idea. The Governor of East Sepik proposed and the Prime Minister also alluded that we should have a university called the Somare University in East Sepik to be established. But firstly, to honour the Grand Chief as the first Prime Minister, this institution was established in 1963, around the same time when the Grand Chief became a politician and eventually became the Prime Minister.

Therefore, it's fitting that we call it SILAG to honor Somare. And even other leaders like Sir Julius Chan, one of the pioneers who is still here with us and other good leaders who have gone before us to honor them is to give governance and quality leadership. We must ensure such programs are properly accredited to international standards and leadership provided in those areas are wanting to our country. In doing so will improve quality and at the same time honor somebody like him.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

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

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

Bill read a third time.

CONSTITUTIONAL (AMENDMENT) LAW 2023

First Reading

Proposed Law presented by **Mr James Marape** and read a first time.

Ordered – That the Proposed Law now stands referred to the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Laws, Acts and Subordinate Legislation.

08/04

ORGANIC LAW ON THE NUMBER OF MINISTERS (AMENDMENT) LAW 2023

First Reading

Proposed law presented by **Mr James Marape** and read a first time.

Ordered – That the Proposed Law now stands referred to the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Laws, Acts and Subordinate Legislation.

QUESTIONS

Teachers Pay Increment

Mr JOHN KAUPA – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister for Public Service and for the Minister for Education to take note.

We have almost about 70, 000 teachers in the country; some are teaching in the rural areas and some are in the most remote areas. They are representing the face of this government in those various places.

A three per cent increment was paid to all public servants. I am asking this question because my uncle made a follow-up regarding this three per cent from Karimui bush all the way to Kundiawa town. So, if one teacher is asking about the three per cent increment then it also affects the other teachers throughout the country.

Therefore, I want to ask the Minister for Public Service whether he is aware that the three per cent increment was not awarded to teachers from 2022 to 2024.

My three questions are;

- (1) Can the teachers be paid the three per cent increment like any other public servants?
- (2) If yes, then what per cent are they going to be paid on?
- (3) When are they going to be paid their salary increment?

Thank you, Acting Speaker.

Mr JOE SUNGI – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, and I thank the honorable Member for Moresby North-East for asking a very important question regarding teachers three per cent increment; CPI based on the public servants salary increase as well.

Mr Acting Speaker, I'll like to inform the House that teachers are part of the Public Servants in the country that we have about 130,000 clocks on the payroll every fortnight. But out of the 130,000 public servants, we have 65,000 teachers and therefore they are also entitled for the three per cent increment.

However, the direct answers to the three questions are; firstly, yes, they are entitled for the three per cent increment. Secondly, the Department of Personnel Management is waiting for the Teachers Union or PNGTA to get themselves organized so they will sort out that matter with the Teacher Service Commission.

09/04

Then from there the process comes to my Department and Treasury or Finance will be able to release the funding to pay the 3 per cent to them. It's just the timing that there's a bit of issue with the union or PNGTA to get themselves organized and come forward with TSC and my department and the Department of Personnel Management. We do the paper work to assist them and make sure that the 3 per cent is also awarded and paid in CPI increase to teachers across Papua New Guinea

Thank you Mr Acting Speaker.

Chimbu – Build Polytechnic School

Mr LUCAS DAWA DEKENA – Thank you Mr Acting Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to ask my question for the first time during this term of Parliament. Before I ask my question to the Higher Education Minister and for the Education Minister to take note, I would like to thank the people of Gumine for giving me the mandate on four consecutive elections. I served the first time I stood for the elections then after that I was taken to Court. in 2017. I was taken to Court and then in the last elections I was voted in again by the Gumine people therefore I am thankful to them for giving me the mandate to speak on their behalf here in Parliament.

In 2014 there was an NEC Decision relating to the setting up of Polytechs around the country. The NEC Decision 105 of 2014 stated that there would be three Polytechs around the country, and one of them would be set up in Chimbu province. Since then nothing has been nothing has been built in my electorate. The Deputy Prime Minister whilst he was Acting Prime Minister visited a site for another project. During his visit he asked me where the Simbu Polytech was and I pointed to a grassland with nothing but fencing

Therefore, my question is to the Higher Education Minister but I would like the Education Minister to take note because the responsibility was switched between these two ministries. Now I believe Polytech comes under the Higher Education Minister. I'm not sure what has happened to the Polytechs in other provinces if they have been constructed and students have started school but as for Gumine nothing has been done yet, apart from the wire fencing. We believe that there was a substantial amount of money that was released for this project and there is a certain NPC Limited joint venture with TP Solutions where TP Solutions may have given the contract to NPC to start of the constructions.

(1) Can the Minister confirm whether NPC has awarded contracts to?

(2) Can the Minister confirm or deny whether K41 millions of Simbu Polytech funds has been expended?

(3) If yes, where has the K41 million gone? (4) If no, when will Polytech construction start in my electorate and what is the reason for the delay?

Thank you Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr DON POLYE – Mr Acting Speaker, these are very sensitive questions with regards to Polytech in Simbu province and in Gumine district. Yes, I agree with the NEC decision that is in place and it is NEC Decision 105. I have seen that and I've also got some report. But because he

is asking very specific questions as to the contractor and how much money has been paid, if there has been any work done, I don't want to give an answer off the top of my head

10/04

I will give detailed answers because it is very important but that Polytech School will be built and will be built properly in due process with quality. I will articulate more on that so I will ask him to be patient until next week when I will answer the questions in detail. Thank you.

Rural Service Development Program

Mr FRANCIS SIUNE – Thank you Mr. Speaker for giving me this opportunity to speak in this House. Mr. Speaker, my question without notice is directed to Minister for Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs. I think I have asked this question in our previous session but I want to repeat because I haven't seen feedback.

There was a program called Rural Service Development Project or RSDP implemented by the Government of Papua New Guinea through the Local Government and Provincial Affairs. The program was financed by World Bank and the Australian Government in excess of K23 million. It's supposed to be piloted in 20 LLGs in 19 districts, namely; East New Britain, Central, Chimbu, Western Province and Western Highlands.

The program commenced in 2013. This program was vital because it complemented our DSIP and PSI programs in service delivery and could give rise to bottom-up concept. Mobilisation component was done in Simbu. The coordination office was established and launched. Beneficial LLGs have put in their mobilisation funding.

Mr Acting Speaker, since today, nothing has been implemented. My question is, can our good Minister explain what happened to this very important program for the good of everybody? And if there's a stop somewhere, Mr. Speaker can we have this very important program activated and implemented?

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr SOROI EOE – Thank you Mr. Acting Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for Kerowagi for the very important question.

Yesterday, I raised an issue with the Clerk's office if I could seek leave of the Parliament to respond to that question but that has not been granted but thank you for asking the question again so I can fully respond to the issues that you have raised on the 11th of January, the first sitting of the Parliament.

So let me thank you. I would've responded immediately had I not fell ill that whole week. I was not in the Parliament and, therefore, I couldn't respond to you and answer those important issues that you have raised. Nonetheless with the concurrence of the Chair, if I could now respond in detail to the questions that have been raised.

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, the Chair recognizes that we have many members of the House willing to ask questions within the time frame we have and whether question time will give you enough time to explain. I will ask you to seek leave of the Chair after the question time and we can allow you to respond.

Mr. SOROI EOE – If that is okay with the Member for Kerowagi, I thank you Chair.

11/04

Disposal of Nuclear Waste

Mr MUGUWA DILU – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for recognising me. My question is directed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

On the 13th of January this year, BBC news reported that the nuclear power plant in Japan was going to dispose one million tonnes of nuclear waste into the Pacific Ocean. Now, I must congratulate the Fisheries Minister, he wrote to the Pacific Islands Forum to garner regional support so that they can take a regional position on this issue.

Now that's a violation of the International Convention of 1972 – the London Convention for international actors not to dispose nuclear waste into the Ocean. The Pacific Ocean especially the Western Pacific Ocean is host to about one-third of the world's tuna stock and we are host to also marine biodiversity that has a lot of value when it comes to blue ocean and blue carbon trade. We also know that the fisheries industry in this country contributes more than K1 billion into the government coffers so that we can implement our national budget.

Is the Foreign Affairs Minister progressing any bilateral talks with authorities in Japan so that they can stop the irresponsible behaviour that they propose to undertake?

Thank you

Mr JUSTIN TKATCHENKO – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker and I thank the Member for this very important question. Last year in APEC, I had a personal meeting with the Foreign Affairs Minister of Japan and I raised this question to him on behalf of the Pacific Island leaders as well as our country as well to find out what the situation is with the nuclear or radioactive water

that they plan to release into the Pacific Ocean. He guaranteed that the radioactive water was perfectly treated and could be drunk as normal drinking water and said that he will ensure that there is no radioactivity in this water at all. Now that was from that meeting then, Our Prime Minister also had a meeting with the Prime Minister of Japan and also received a letter from the Japanese Prime Minister stating the same but has delayed the releasing of this radioactive water into the Pacific until further notice. So the situation is that if they do release this so-called 'free-of-radioactive water' into the Pacific, firstly it will affect the people of Japan then it will spread throughout the Pacific.

Now the Prime Minister of Japan guarantees the last thing he wants to do is contaminate his own people. So after that, I represented the Prime Minister and Papua New Guinea and presented the letter to the Pacific Islands Forum Retreat which was chaired by the outgoing Chairman – the new Fijian Prime Minister, Honourable Rambuka. We brought up this subject matter and it was agreed that more consultation had to be done. The Pacific Islands Forum leaders have of course had experience in this nuclear radio activity, radioactivity especially in Micronesia and those other countries.

As of to date, from the agreement from the Pacific Island Forum leaders, we will continue to fight to not allow this nuclear or radioactivity contaminated water to be released and look at other alternatives that would be better off for the benefit of everyone for the long term.

12/04

Yes, Member, we have been in consultation at the highest level with the Japanese authorities, our Pacific leaders but also with world leaders when we had the ministerial forum as well with Australia on this issue of radioactivity water being released.

At this point of time it is on hold for until further negotiations and we hope for common sense to prevail that an alternative is found out for the benefit of not releasing this radioactive water into the Pacific so it contaminates our fisheries and affects our people greatly. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Don Matheson and PNG Ports Corruption Scandal

Mr JOESPH LELANG – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. My questions are directed to the Prime Minister. Mr Acting Speaker, recently the Australian Broadcasting Commission or ABC has reported an alleged corruption ring that involves influencing the awarding of contracts in PNG major ports.

The financing of this major ports is funded from the Australian Infrastructure of Financing Facility to the tune of US\$434 million or an equivalent of AUS\$621 million. It has been alleged in that report that this ring involves a Philippine-based company called International Container Terminal Services that paid an alleged AUS\$4.35 million into an Australian citizen's account earlier in Singapore. This money was used by this Australian citizen, a Mr Don Matheson, to bribe PNG Ports Officials so they can award lucrative contracts to this Filipino company to operate PNG's biggest ports to be funded out of this Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility.

Mr Speaker, we are facing another negative backlash on our country's image and it is very disturbing when it is an Australian citizen who is the ring leader and mastermind in this allegedly corrupting the Australian taxpayers own money.

It is also disturbing that this gentleman has even boasted alleging that he has close ties to our Prime Minister and plays golf with him including assisting with medical bills of a family member in Philippines.

Mr Acting Speaker, these are serious allegations and it is important that these questions are asked so that the Prime Minister can clear the air on this matter.

(1) Is the Prime Minister aware of this ABC report and the central role of Don Matheson in this scandal?

(2) Can the Prime Minister confirm or deny that he has asked Don Matheson to pay medical bills of a close relative in the Philippines?

(3) Can the Prime Minister inform Parliament on the steps his Government has taken to address this massive corruption that plagued PNG Ports in influencing the awarding of contracts to this Filipino company?

Mr William Duma – Point of Order! I want to point out to the good leader of the Opposition that the financing package from the Australians has not reached our shores yet and money has not even been utilised for the project. So there is no basis for anyone to say that Australian taxpayers' money has been misused or used in a corrupt way.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, your Point of Order is in order. I will ask the Opposition Leader to finish asking his question and Prime Minister can respond.

Mr JOSEPH LELANG – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, this happened in 2017 so I think the Prime Minister is capable of clearing the air on all of these.

(4) And the last question, what steps are taken to deal with this Australian citizen who is the ring leader and mastermind behind this massive corruption scandal and the Filipino company who has bribed our PNG officials to get these particular contracts?

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you Mr Acting Speaker. I am happy to answer these questions raised by the Opposition Leader.

These are important questions raised for public interest. The Australian ABC has done their investigation and publication on this matter so it is important that the question is asked and response is given so I appreciate the Opposition Leader for the questions and the opportunity to respond.

13/04

I think he prefaced his questions by giving some background so it is only fair that from what information I have I make some responses before I answer the questions that he asked.

Just for the record, the alleged transactions and involvement of the Australian that is named on the Floor of the Parliament; the transactions took place before the arrangements with the Australian Infrastructure Fund Facility that we have been running with PNG Ports.

This is a good program, with substantial port interventions with six major ports in our country running through this facility. So the allegations that ABC News has picked up were matters that took place before these port intervention arrangements took place or were agreed upon.

The current port facility with the Australian assistance has taken place under my government's watch but the allegations that are now spun, took place before that, I think the Opposition Leader did make a mention of 2017-2018 and thereabout.

Just to give assurance to Parliament and to the country, I have asked the Minister for State-owned Enterprise and Kumul Consolidated Holdings to give a total investigation and check on this matter so that on a subsequent parliamentary sitting or through a public press release we could inform the country of the total background of what happened during the 2017-2018 period. As a reference to a major company that operated, that company's engagement was secured through due process in 2017-2018. That company operates Port Moresby and Lae Ports, as we speak, and to be fair, that company is a Philippines company that operates Melbourne Port and some other big ports in the world. It is the second biggest private port operator as we speak. Now, whatever that company did with the person named I am not privy to the full information but to be fair on PNG Ports and its current Management and Board we have asked for a total look into this transaction.

PNG Ports, in one of my statements I have released, is one of our success stories in the Kumul Group of Companies as far as Kumul Group of Companies is concerned. We are very much concerned that this report has cast a black spot into PNG Ports. It has a proven success story, and it sits on the entrance of trade and commerce into our country so we are very mindful of the implications of this report.

We are doing internal investigations to ascertain if there are any acts of impropriety whether by the operator or the person named in this report. Whether he plays golf with me or not is secondary, I do not tolerate corruption and illegal activities.

I am the Patron of the Port Moresby Royal Golf Club, and I stay there to play so anyone that walks into that club whether a visitor or a new person I invite them for a game or walk at the Golf Course as part of my health regimes anyway.

So, Mr Maddison plays one or two rounds with me, the person that is named, but outside of playing golf this report has cast a negative implication on PNG Ports so I have tasked the Minister for State-Owned Enterprise to review what has happened and he has given his preliminary observations on the transactions but the fullest review will be undertaken and reported back to the Parliament.

I take this time also to relay to the country and all who come here to do business that you are not here to break laws to do business in our country.

14/04

Today before I took this question there was a circulation in our government *Whatsapp* on illegal shops at the ports in Lae and I have sent word to relevant authorities and if it is found to be illegal they just have to de-register the company and conduct investigations. Those who are entrusted with responsibilities to do this sort of things must run with it. You do not have to wait for instructions from the top and it should apply to everyone who comes into this country. Whether you play golf with me or associate with anyone but follow the laws and do things correctly and you will enjoy your stay here. We are getting a full investigation done into this matter to check what is happening. We will report back to the Parliament if I could reserve the right to report back as soon as the full report of this transaction is made available to us.

Lole Mining Environmental Pollution Concerns

Mr PETER ISOAIMO – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. My questions are directed to the Minister for Mining and I would appreciate if the Minister for CEPA can take note.

Three weeks ago, I attended to an invitation to a forum organized by the Tolokuma Mine's new owners, the Lole Mining Company, at Bluff Inn resort in Hiri-Koiari Electorate. I learnt then that the company is now licensed to commence operations of the mine.

Whilst I do appreciate and welcome the news for the project to kick start for revenue to come into the country through our annual budget process; my people of Kairuku have an issue with the re-opening of the mine, especially with the dumping of the mine waste that had actually happened in the last 25-30 years of mine operations to the people of Kuni, Mekeo and Kairuku LLGs respectively.

These are people who live along the St Joseph - Angabanga River that runs from the Tolokuma area in Goilala District and ends up at the Abiara/Oreke village at the Kairuku area running through Kuni and Mekeo LLGs.

My questions to the Minister are;

(1) Can he deny or confirm that he did issue a mining lease to Lole Mining to re-commence mining?

(2) Is he also going to look into the pollution issue that my people have been affected with for the last 25-30 years of the mine being in operation?

Obviously, the current Member for Goilala will agree with me because he visited the St Gerald's School of Nursing in Veifa'a on February 10 2023 and he would agree with me that the Angabanga River has sedimentation build up on the river bed that causes havoc as soon as the rain falls in the mountains of Goilala and the flood runs through in a matter of minutes.

Having to run through a dry road in west Mekeo area and only in a matter of hours he had to go through 2-3-metre-deep water flood, so there is a real issue here. We've also had deformed babies and mysterious deaths.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member, make a short statement and get straight to your question.

Mr PETER ISOAIMO – All of these have been caused by the mine for almost 20-30 years of the mine being in operation.

15/04

With the re-opening of the mine, I would like to draw the Minister's attention to the livelihoods of these people. Otherwise, we would be causing genocide like other places in the world.

My question to the Minister is;

(3) Has the Minister renewed or issued a licence to Lole Mining to commence operation in the absence of all the environmental issues that are yet to be resolved?

I would invite the Minister to look at some world class safety-cautious mines in the world. For example; with an invitation, the late Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare and I visited –

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member, you have already asked your question and now you are making statements. We have limited time for questions.

Mr PETER ISOAIMO – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. These are matters of importance and we need to get the Minister to answer correctly because it involves lives of people. The people of Kairiku are people of Papua New Guinea that deserve human rights like everybody else.

My question is; can the Minister confirm if he has re-issued the mining licence without consideration for all the environmental impacts it will cause again to my people?

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, you are aware that I have been interrupting the Member on his statement but his concern is on the issues in his electorate. I hope you will respond well to the Member.

Sir ANO PALA – Mr Acting Speaker, I am aware of the importance of this question. The Member for Kairiku has been a real champion of this environmental issue and he has the right to be concerned and should be allowed to raise his concerns on the Floor of Parliament, especially to me as the Minister for Mining.

This is an issue that must be addressed at all times on this Floor of Parliament. Environmental issues are important because if affects the lives of people along the rivers. As the Minister responsible, I was not involved in some of these arrangements, especially the mining license.

The license for this mine was issued, but the company went into liquidation. Liquidation is a commercial transaction issue, meaning when you don't have any money, you go into liquidation. You are then governed by the laws of liquidation to handle those issues. But this will not affect your mining right license. That license is still there, and now that the company has found a way out of the liquidation, it is now going into business. The mining licence was issued and is in existence, but as a result of the problems, they couldn't continue. I want to stress that since the company was bought from the liquidators, it can now go into business.

I am concerned about the environmental issues that you have raised. We have to be mindful of the fact that you have been raising this issue since you have been on the Floor of Parliament. You have a right to do so and it is important that we address these issues.

I will leave that area of the aspect of mining to the responsible Minister to answer you. I want to also assure you that I am very concerned about it too, since the mine is likely to be re-open.

16/04

We will look at everywhere possible to minimize the impact of the waste dumping in the rivers. It is something that we should not do. But because companies have been given mining licenses, environmental damages are bound by those commitments. All of us are bound by it but we should not stop looking at its detrimental effects. We must find a way because it not only affects the environment but it also affects our marketability. It affects our value in the industry and in the market place. If we are dumping out there the impact will make it difficult for us to do business. This is because the rest of the world is moving forward and we have to move on as well.

With that, I want to assure you that we will continue to look at a better way. Regarding the mining license, it was done before and I am committed to those commitments that have been made by the previous ministers. It was made for companies which had now gone into commercial commitments too. And as a government we have a duty to honor those commitments, but the Member for Kairiku, I am with you. I am with your people and I am with your concerns and I want to assure you that we are looking at every possible way of minimizing or even stopping disposal of wastes in the rivers. Thank you very much.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I will recognize the Member for North Fly. I think he has been standing throughout the week and I haven't recognized him. So I now recognize the Member for North Fly to ask questions.

Development of Border Facilities

Mr JAMES DONALD – Thank you Mr Acting Speaker, it is very generous of you, because I was sitting and did not stand up. My questions are directed to the Prime Minister. This is regarding the borders of PNG and Indonesia. I realized we do not have a minister for border development but it is more appropriate I ask the Prime Minister. This is in relation to the border post that we are doing in Western Province. On record I think there are two border posts in Western

Province in Sota and Weam and one in North Fly and a proposed one in Middle Fly. Previously we had the one in Wutung and I think the other two in Tumolbil and the rest in West Sepik.

My questions are:

(1) What is the National Government focus and plan towards the border facilities?

(2) How are we going to progress on the development specifically in terms of infrastructure and the funding arrangement and all of it?

Now take the case of Wutung; we have realized that these posts were previously developed by successive governments under a funding arrangement from NDB, I think more than K200 or K300 million plus. You will see that the infrastructures are substandard. When I say this, I mean there is no power and no water running, and no customer service and even no office space for staff. On top of all these, there are no trading facilities. It looks like we are going nowhere, and what concerns me is how do we, Western Province, make sure we don't repeat that same mistake and progress on?

(3) So what are the funding or resource arrangements for the next lot of infrastructure for other proposed border post?

(4) Do we have the same option of NDB or are there other arrangements?

17/04

(5) Which department do we work with, is it through the Minister for Foreign Affairs or Trade and Investment to fast track this border post development?

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, I thank the Member for North Fly for his important questions as his electorate is located right at the border with Indonesia and West Papua. There is need for us to step up our border interventions.

Last December, I was privileged to spend a night at Bench back but before I arrived there, I visited Weihom, its 15 kilometers from the national border and it was rather sad to see that this military border post was completely deteriorated and not functioning.

When I came back from that visit, I committed to step up our interventions and support at the border areas.

Mr Acting Speaker, I also want to thank all the members of Parliament for their support in signing this ratification in our border treaty with Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. This gives us the basis for us to go into new treaty arrangements. We will be consulting our landowners along the borders especially on our side, the LLGs, council wards, the districts and border provinces in making sure whatever we need to do in the border areas must step up and must have an agency

responsible for border going forward and with that I want to assure the House and all the border districts and provinces.

The function at the moment has been called back and it's under the Department of Foreign Affairs in terms of the border. Mr Acting Speaker, we are looking at the border areas from a trade and commerce perspective. It should be classified as a special economic zone along the border areas.

On the other side of the border we have 270 million Indonesians. It is a robust place in terms of market for our producers and we are looking in that context so the Department of Commerce and Industry as well as the Ministries of International Trade and Foreign Affairs will work in partnership with Defense to look into how best we could structure our border area that is geared towards caring our country's need going forward into the future because Indonesia has been our trading partner for so long. We have downplayed those aspects of our relationship and just seeing them from a political perspective for a long time.

I want to assure the Member and Vice Minister, his district and province as well as Sandaun Province and districts have been engaging in our own government in the last two to three years. We have started a program with the border outpost, Defence Force and the Ministry have taken care of this matter in a holistic approach by integrating Foreign Affairs, Defense, International Trade and Commerce and Industry to have a multi-sectoral approach in the border post.

We can have trade functions at Vanimo/Wutung facing Jayapura and Daru/Weihom facing Merauke on the other side as well as the middle areas. There is deep conversation going on with Indonesian authorities and during my visit to Indonesia we have engaged for trade and commerce to be activated for us to have a border use and sharing arrangements.

18/04

Not just at the traditional crossing level but more or less at the commercial and government to government crossing in the border areas.

We will call the leaders from the provinces concern to sit together as we worked on new Treaty with Indonesia for the borders. In that occasion we will pull together our focus on trade and commerce and get that place open up instead of allowing it to remain a blackspot in our country.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honorable members, Question Time has lapsed, I just like to put every members of the House on notice. I understand that many members want to ask questions

but we have only 45 minutes for questions. So, when you want to ask a question be well prepared and make the question short.

I am requesting the ministers who are responding to the questions, please make your reply short so that we can give opportunity to all members to ask questions within the 45 minutes.

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS

Mr SOROI EOE (Kikori-Minister for Provincial and Local-Level Government Affairs) – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I seek leave of Parliament to respond to questions asked by honorable Member for Kerowagi on the 11th of January this year, which were repeated today.

Leave granted.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Member for Kerowagi on this question without notice that was asked on the 11th of January 2023 regarding the status of Rural Service Development Project or RSDP in Kerowagi electorate of Chimbu Province and elsewhere in Papua New Guinea.

I then assured the Honorable Member and the House that I will seek advice from the department and respond to the Member in that sitting of the Parliament or later sitting. However, this didn't transpire because I felt ill in that session hence, I will now respond.

By way of background, I wish to inform the Member and this Honorable House that RSDP is a World Bank funded rural service delivery program that complements DSIP and PSIP projects. The National Government secured a concessional loan of \$23 million in 2017 from the World Bank for this important project.

The Department of Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs is the implementing and oversight agency of this project which aims to implement tangible projects identified by local communities themselves at ward level based on priorities and the needs of those communities. The desired outcome of RSDP is empowering and transforming rural communities to improve qualities of life there.

For the last four years, we have had drawn down nearly 30 per cent of the World Bank funding for total of 256 project proposals throughout the nation particularly those provinces that are involved. There have been delays in projects implementation due to external causes such as

Covid-19 and the National Election that recently concluded, impacting on the overall delivery of the project along with internal challenges.

Mr Acting Speaker, the program is currently being implemented in five provinces Central, East New Britain, Chimbu, Western and West Sepik. A total of 19 districts and 20 LLGs in these provinces are participating in these important projects. Some of 256 project proposals have been identified out of which 29 are targeted at women's grouping.

19/04

Examples of these community projects are construction of aid post, construction of classrooms and teachers houses, water catchments projects, bridges, community halls, and solar power and livelihood projects for women and mothers.

East New Britain Province is the only province that is into the implementation phase, starting with Raluana LLG, followed by Simbu Province and Central and Western who are however not far away from this full implementation of this project.

There is LLG counterpart contribution an amount of K70 000 that is required. These funds are equally shared with selected wards and when total project funding for each project proposals at ward level is finally vetted by the communities. My department is working with all levels of government to try and make systems of Government work in the provinces, districts, LLGs and including wards. And this project is one of the most important intervention to make sure projects at ward levels are delivered.

Mr Acting Speaker, Chimbu Province alone has the highest number of project proposals numbering up to 53 in total that are awaiting draw down of funds from the World Bank. A total of four LLG's in the province are participating in four districts namely Kumai Bomai LLG in Gumine, Suai LLG in Sinasina-Yonggomugl, Siana LLG in Chuave and Gena Wagula LLG in Kerowagi. The selection of districts and LLG projects were done by the provincial administration. Whilst all the wards had the opportunity to submit their expression of interests, Kerowagi had only 14 project proposals including two women groups that were identified and selected by communities and approved. During the first quarter of this year, my department will carry out outstanding activities that will need to be completed in Kerowagi district and the Chimbu province as a whole. My department to complete development committee followed by LLG development committee endorsement. Once this project is completed we will move into ward development grant agreement signing to open ward accounts to transfer funds to start implementing the actual projects. I want to assure the Honourable Member that process of Kerowagi will be undertaken in

the first quarter of this year. A total cost of 14 project proposal for his district is estimated at around K1.2 million.

Mr Acting Speaker, I must also inform the Honorable Member that part of the delay is also due to following stringent financial management guidelines put in place by World Bank and as the implementing agency we are in compliance thus my department only receives funds if and when we acquit projects related expenses to the World Bank. Likewise, these experiences are also passed down through our communities throughout the country. I hope that clarifies the status of this project for Member for Kerowagi.

I thank the House for listening

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed –

That grievances be noted.

20/04

Gender-Based Violence

Sir JULIUS CHAN (New Ireland) – Thank you Mr Acting Speaker and thank you Governor of East Sepik. I actually beat you to standing up, really. You may be fit but I actually beat you. Thank you. I'm not going to be very long with the Acting Speaker.

Few weeks ago, we had a big demonstration here on gender violence and I'm going to try to say a few words just to remind us that there is a problem. The recent initiative in combatting gender-based violence, GBV, as it is, how each province, particularly my own province should respond and should have a strategy for it, it's no good to just simply demonstrate, see and do nothing. The fact of the matter is it is very, very important, gender-based violence is a very serious problem in Papua New Guinea. Our women have suffered and you don't know but they're some of the most patient creature on this earth.

The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals say the magnitude of gender-based violence, GBV, incidence in Papua New Guinea is considered by some of the epidemic proportions. Over 41 per cent of men in Papua New Guinea admit to having raped someone and over two-thirds of women are estimated to have suffered some form of physical or sexual violence.

It's very, very serious. We are among the top of the world for this kind of activities. Looks like we're very much on the side of animals and the report goes on to note that GBV is considered

by many Papua New Guineans to be an acceptable normal part of life, which means that the levels reported are probably low. The actual level of GBV is much higher than reported.

GBV and gender equality in general are major issues that need to be addressed in Papua New Guinea by all of us leaders who are elected to this Parliament and beginning with the provincial governments using its sub national government to introduce some form of control.

I think over the past years Honourable Governor of National Capital District, Powes Parkop, has pushed dealing with gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea. He has established the NCDC gold standard strategy of addressing GBV, which is a first comprehensive strategy developed in Papua New Guinea at the provincial level to address the issue of GBV.

The strategy takes its lead from the Goal 1 of the National Goals and Directive Principles which establish the goal for every person to be dynamically involved in the process of freeing himself or herself of every form of domination or oppression that each man or woman will have the opportunity to develop as a whole person. I think Governor Parkop called a high level meeting some two years ago which brought together members of parliament, governors, development partners and others to devise a way forward.

21/04

The strategic way to introduce information on gender-based violence into education, the work place, government, the Police, courts, the market place transportation and home environment. Overall, the approach I think of Governor Pakop seems like a well-intentioned and well thought-out strategy for dealing with gender-based violence. It, Mr Acting Speaker, deserves support of all the provinces. During the Governors' week we were talking about how we can empower provinces, so let us begin there.

Now standing here before you I want to give you a bird's eye view that I have taken this matter very seriously and a possible contribution approach of New Ireland. I also recommend that New Ireland take its own initiative to prepare its strategy for combating gender based violence. They should be tailored at specific social and cultural characteristics of New Ireland. It should serve as New Ireland's contribution to the proposed governors' conference which is coming on GBV. Our Chairman, the Governor of East Sepik and those matters suggested by Governor Powes Parkop.

The drafting of such a strategy should be the responsibility of community development which we all have and law and order sectors which we should have but we are not getting it and the administration which is very disintegrated today. The overall approach of the strategy should

be based on the eight steps recommended by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities which I am not going to talk about it which is a pretty long piece.

Why I spend time on this is because women are important. Mr Acting Speaker No matter how you look at it, no one here today would be here if it was not for a woman, our mothers. I lost mine about 48 years ago. I am old but I still miss her.

Women are quite simply the source of life. Women are the creators of humanity. Without women there would be no people. Now I think that makes women pretty important to all of us.

I want to link that with youth somewhat because we are the sons of women. Well if women are creators of life, then youths are the creators of the future. All of us, know, I think me more than you all, are old (lapuns), we'll be gone. You will stay for a very long time. I will be going very soon, oh there are some people out there who are praying for me to go earlier.

(Members laughter)

Sir JULIUS CHAN – Now I hope you won't get too far. You will beat me to the end of the line. Don't get too eager to get rid of us. Still the truth is, the old folks you and me, you are not as old as me, but I am just generalizing it, we will not be around for that much longer. Unless you have the special road that we do not have. We are all going the same way.

22/04

Mr Acting Speaker, who will be left. That's why I linked the women and the youth. Those who will be left will be the youth. And who will depend on the youth to make the world a better place than it is today.

The youth, our young people. If the youth of the world today do not make the world a better place tomorrow, then I say there is no hope for humanity. So, I have faith in the youth and I know they can do it. So it is really a pleasure for me to say a few words on women and youth today. And to emphasise that I am addressing the youth of New Ireland in Port Moresby and everywhere else in this country. They must not get involved in this game. They must discipline themselves. New Irelanders, you have to be very ashamed if you are part of this organisation that constantly denotes the value of women. Women are the creators of life.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Governor, I am sorry to interrupt you, just reminding you that your ten minutes of debate has lapsed. Ill allow you to sum up your debate.

Sir JULIUS CHAN – Thank you very much, Mr Acting Speaker, you are the only one that can do that.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Governor, with respect for you, I gave you the extra three minutes.

Sir JULIUS CHAN – I want to repeat myself and I can see some of you are bored. I said women are the creators of life and that is true but even when women create life but for some reason we do not seem to appreciate that women do. Why is it that men of the world and men of New Ireland abuse women? Why is it that United Nations say that Papua New Guinea has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence of any country in the world?

Let us not lie to ourselves using sugar coated verbiage, if we cannot look after ourselves, our human beings, our women who brought us into this world, then all we have said is just rubbish.

Violence in any country in the world as I have said, why is it that high percentage of women in Papua New Guinea report that they have been raped then in almost any other country and the world? This is just the truth. We should be ashamed. We should not camouflage it. We should not hide it or pretend to say all these good things about the resource-rich country floating on a sea of oil. These are all just lies if you cannot look after your mother, the women of this country!

Mr Acting Speaker, we are among the worst offenders in the world and that to me and I am sure you share my feeling, is something we really cannot be proud of.

I am not speaking as though New Ireland is not part of this, in fact that is why I began by focusing on Now Ireland.

The bottom line is, it is disgusting, and it must stop. Every time someone gets mad at someone else, they decide that person is a witch and they start tormenting and even torturing them.

23/04

Well I can tell all the women and honourable members here today that we must stop this. You and I don't stop this then they can do a lot of demonstration but they cannot.

But, I want to promise you, Mr Acting Speaker, I take this matter very seriously. My government is going to work on a policy on Violence Against Women. We are going to set up hotlines for women to call if they are abused, and we are going to set up safe houses for women to live in so that they can get away from those who are abusing them and we are going to punish the abusers. I say to all men of New Ireland today, wherever you are, if you abuse a woman you are going to jail, full stop. Why? Because you show your wives, daughters, and mothers no pity so if

you show your woman no pity then we will also show you no pity. The right house for you is in jail.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Governor, I am sorry I will have to interrupt you again, your other three minutes has lapsed.

Sir JULIAS CHAN – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Impact of Global Economy

Mr ALLAN BIRD (East Sepik) – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. And may I say to the House that it is always a privilege for Sir Julius to speak and I will always be happy to give up my space for him, in recognition of the fact that he is the last man standing. He spoke on an issue that is very close to my heart and I would like to endorse those comments.

Mr Acting Speaker, my grievance is in relation to the economy today, particularly in what is happening in the US, in some of their medium size banks. We noted last week the closing of Silicon Valley Bank, which funds organizations like Facebook and a lot of these Tech Companies and it has gone bust lately, Credit Swiss in Europe, which is one of their biggest banks is also in trouble and there are many other banks that are indicating that they could be in trouble in the coming months.

Mr Acting Speaker, the world could be facing another financial meltdown compared to 1997 and this is being brought about by the prolonged pandemic that the entire world faced in Covid-19 which forced a lot of governments to borrow, including our government. The Central Banks around the world began to tighten interest rates in order to control inflation. I have noticed in Papua New Guinea in the last few months that there has been a lot of concern by the country on the issue of inflation. Many Papua New Guineans don't understand why we are facing this and we somehow feel that what is happening in the other parts of the world should not affect us.

But, I want to say here in the House that whilst we are concerned with DSIP, fixing things in our district and provinces we should have a mechanism that recognizes what is happening in other parts of the world that affect us. Many of us still deny that Covid-19 was real and we forgot that China is only now reducing its tight control on Covid-19, it has only done so in the last couple of months. China is the largest country on earth and it continues to take Covid-19 very seriously.

Also in Papua New Guinea, I noticed that the Central Bank has not tightened interest rates compared to other Central Banks and so the impact of our banks by the Central Bank perhaps is not as significant as we see in other parts of the world.

Now, just to give everyone the size of the problem, Credit Swiss will be requiring more than \$50 billion in cash injection from the Central Bank in its country to keep operating and that is how significant it is. So if other banks follow suit then a lot of our banks could be in trouble because we are borrowing from the world.

24/04

That is how significant it is and if other banks follow suit a lot of our programs could also be in trouble because we are borrowing from the world and we have significant debt. I am worried about the knock-on effects. And just to give the House a further understanding of what is happening as a result of Covid-19 and as a result of the Ukraine/Russian war, fertilizer prices have increased 110 per cent across the world,

The two crops that rely heavily on fertilizer are rice and wheat. You will notice that this year the price of rice and wheat globally has increased by 20 per cent. Last year some wheat producers increased prices by up to 160 per cent. I don't believe that we should continue to bury our head in the sand and pretend that what is happening in the globally economy will not affect us. My view is that we should be doing more locally and increasing local production so that we can off-set some of these things that are happening globally.

Our people in the towns and cities will feel this impact and that is why I have been asking a lot of questions about power as the cost of power feeds into the general cost that everybody needs to pay. And as we wait for interventions to happen, this is where I personally do not want to continue to blame the former PNC government. I think that is an old story and we should not continue to do that. Whatever has happened has happened, let us put it behind us. We should be really taking ownership of the issues now.

On the issue on jobs and again it is important for the economy, we just do not have the jobs and we know that and I recall when I was sitting in the Opposition in this House; the then Opposition Leader Patrick Pruaitch made a presentation here where the numbers that he got from the Central Bank showed a decline of 100 thousand jobs. This happened during the time of PNC in government. Fast forward to today, we still don't know what we are doing in terms of jobs. We have all these really nice programs and every district has district programs happening but we do not know how it is feeding into the economy.

We have no idea because our statistics is not working and all the time we are making guesses and throwing mud at each other but the underlying problem still remains. We have more than 70 thousand young people finishing school every year, are we creating 70 thousand jobs every

year? The answer is no and if you look at the presentation by the Treasurer out of the K24 billion Budget, only K900 million is being targeted at the economy.

I do not want to complain about that because that is how we have always treated the economy and if you look at every single Budget, the economy gets a very small proportion of the National Budget in terms of everything we want to pay for. Education and health get over 40 per cent of the Budget. And if you look at all of our administration costs for salaries it leaves very little for the economy. And without the economy we are going to sit back and worry how we are going to keep the rice and wheat prices low and if people have not already figured it out, palm oil prices are going up so the cooking oil prices in the shops are going to go up as well. In essence the entire basket of basic goods that our people want to use, particularly those in towns and cities will increase in price.

And we need some kind of intervention, perhaps from Parliament. I am not sure if we have an economic committee, it's perhaps time to activate it. We need to be talking to our industries and those that are supplying power and bring in the entire core structure of doing business down. We have got to make our economy more competitive so it grows. Whilst we are intervening in the SME space with concessional funding, it is actually like a drop in the ocean; it is not making a difference.

25/04

It might make a difference to one or two families, but not to the wider community.

My grievance debate is that; I would like to see someone take ownership of it. I know the Treasurer 'cops a lot of flak' for it, but what people do not realise is that the Treasurer only brings in the money, he does not spend the money. The spending occurs in other agencies.

As a member of this Government, I would like to see some of the portfolio ministers, in terms of the money you are getting from Treasury and are using in your departments, how are you contributing to alleviating some of this problems. We need to know and be debating those issues. It is rather unfair that we target the Treasurer all the time, when his job is only to bring money into the country, whilst other people spend it.

My biggest fear is the knock-on effects from the banks. If banks in Europe, America and Asia starts to collapse, we will be in trouble. We will sit here and pretend to be busy with our DSIP and PSIP to build roads and classrooms, and we will be affected.

Mr Acting Speaker, this is my grievance debate for this afternoon. Thank you.

State of the Economy

Mr KEITH IDUHU (Hiri-Koiari) – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for this opportunity to address the House also on similar sentiments as shared by the Governor of East Sepik Province.

The issues I would like to address is on the culmination of facts on the state of affairs affecting the globe and our municipal economy, which culminated into an exchange the other day between the Treasurer and the former Prime Minister, the Member for Ialibu-Pangia.

I address this issue as a first-time member on the Floor of Parliament. There are 41 of us in this House, most of who have been prompted by the events of yesteryears and complaints of yesteryears to come into this House and make a particular difference.

As a Papua New Guinean, I feel as if we have a very short memory. In the PNC-led regime, everybody wanted to throw stones, even some of us are in this House today. Again in this regime, the same very people are so quick to throw stones at the current regime and its affairs and how we are running this country.

Our good Treasurer is only one man, so as our Honourable Prime Minister James Marape and also our former Prime Minister, the Member for Ialibu-Pangia, Mr Peter O'Neill. We seem to be very quick to judge but not very quick to offer solutions.

The writings are on the wall. The government cannot fix everything for the population at any one time, at the drop of a hat. But the efforts that every successive government makes, are worth taking note of and worth taking the heart to work for this country. It is now 48 years and we seem to be continuously doing the same thing, yet expecting a very different result.

As a former late President of the United States once said; “let’s not ask what of the country, but what you can do for your country”. Ask not of what the country can do for you, but what you and I can do for our country. They also said; “Rome was not built in one day.”

26/04

The economy of course needs our help. I think we can all agree to that. But I think where we are missing the point when we discuss our economic hardships is that 47 years has transpired, we made constitutional changes, legislative reforms, bureaucratic changes at the Cabinet levels of successive governments and yet no matter how many changes we make, how many resources deals we sign off, how many big projects we can sign off, we still find ourselves in a very strong disadvantaged position.

When I say we, I am talking about the eight million people of this country, 80 per cent of whom are all in the rural sector. We can’t continue to do this blame game because the point is, people are moving from the rural villages into the fringes of every city. Port Moresby is a classic

example. Lae is a clear classic example. Mt Hagen is another example. Every urban centre has its fringes of communities building and brewing up.

We are all running for the same pie and yet every time we talk about building the rural economy, well how are we going to build the rural economy if we are not availing credit to the rural economy? And how can we avail credit to the rural economy if we are not availing securities to our rural economy? And how can we avail security to our rural economy if we cannot formalise their assets in the rural economy? This is why people are shifting to six-mile, shifting to Hiri-Koiari, shifting to the fringes of Lae because everybody wants the same thing, poor or rich.

We all want a shelter over our heads, we also want clothing, we all want a meal on the table and all of these things require access to financing. Without financing, we cannot feed our families, our people are going to continue to struggle and the complaints are going to continue to culminate and every 18 months, you will want to change the government and yet we complain about the lack of stability.

We have an opportunity. We have just passed the K24 billion Budget. A budget that will probably increase the next financial year and will keep increasing against the very little security that is only available to this country. Our faults, and I resound and I adopt entirely the sentiments shared by the Governor of East Sepik Province. We need a very close look at the structure of Government and I say this with great care. I say we need to look at the legal framework. We keep trying to play rugby league on a golf course. We keep trying to put a square pole through a round hole. This is why we keep finding ourselves at the drawing board.

We keep trying to do reforms at the high level but for you to understand, every economy on this planet earth and the globe, works off security. The security is land. We have 80 per cent of land in the rural sector, when are we going to include our rural populace if we do not legislate or formalise that legal economy? If we do not have proper identification for our legal populace so that they are not creating extra-legal activities so that they can survive. But imagine if we are to formalise their local economy, their access to credit, then we will be doing a great justice to our people and for our people.

I also adopt and endorse the sentiments shared by the Governor of East Sepik Province that really requires a need for the playing field on which our budget will be run. When we are running the economy, we must avail the necessary security for every Papua New Guinean to access credit. There is no point in putting K1 billion into NDB so as to avail it to the rural sector if the rural sector is not going to be able to avail the security fundamental banking principles, to access that credit. There is no point!

On the statement made by the Prime Minister on our country standing on milky land because it has oil, gas and our country is considered as Black Christian Nation.

When PNG first gained Independence in 1975, there was one thing that stood firm and gave courage and strength to our country to gain independence and it's the foundation for this country. I want to thank the former Prime Minister and Member for Ialibu-Pangia, for realizing the importance during that time. I also thank the former Speaker, for realizing the importance. It's very important and it's to save our country in giving us strength to stand firm.

Everything stands firmly on stone and it's the foundation of a country. All of us in here one way or another are considered as Christians. When we first got elected the pastors prayed for us and dedicated us all to the Lord for his wisdom, knowledge and understanding upon our daily lives to lead the country.

But one thing that I want to touch on is about the Bible in front us in this House. This Bible doesn't have protection or guidance over it.

27/04

Unless we take some structural adjustment on the legal framework of credit in the context of formalizing customary land tenure in this country, we will be wasting our time in repeating ourselves like a turning time clock. And sooner or later if the global economy crashes we are going to be dragged with it because we failed to understand our own prudence and social unit of clans.

For thousands of years Papua New Guineans always hunted and gathered together as clans. Why do we keep kidding ourselves? There is absolutely necessary need that this kind of reform and thinking must be adopted. I encourage and urge all critics because the same critics will be continuing the same narrative even twenty months down the line.

I thank the Government, we all must work together and I thank our Prime Minister for his tireless efforts and sleepless night in the kind of work he does for the country and the former Prime Minister and the former Ministers for the contributions in their respective duties in serving the country.

With these few remarks the Lord will bless you all, thank you so much.

Enact Legislation to Protect Bible

Mr KANSOL HARWAI KAMDARU (Middle Ramu) – Thank you Mr Acting Speaker. My grievance debate will be brief. But firstly, I thank the Lord for allowing us this time to live.

Secondly, I thank our Honorable Prime Minister of this country, the Deputy Prime Minister, the former Prime Minister and Member for Ialibu-Pangia, I thank and congratulate him for his contribution.

I also thank the Lord for his mercy and love upon Sir Julius Chan, Governor of New Ireland, which some of the senior leaders have left us but he is still around and with us today.

My debate is brief but very important concerning the lives of our people of Papua New Guinea. I want to elaborate further on the statement made by the Prime Minister on our country standing on milky land because it has oil, gas and our country is considered as Black Christian Nation.

When PNG first gained Independence in 1975, there was one thing that stood firm and gave courage and strength to our country to gain independence and it's the foundation for this country. I want to thank the former Prime Minister and Member for Ialibu-Pangia, for realizing the importance during that time. I also thank the former Speaker, for realizing the importance. It's very important and it's to save our country in giving us strength to stand firm.

Everything stands firmly on stone and it's the foundation of a country. All of us in here one way or another are considered as Christians. When we first got elected the pastors prayed for us and dedicated us all to the Lord for his wisdom, knowledge and understanding upon our daily lives to lead the country.

But one thing that I want to touch on is about the Bible in front us in this House. This Bible doesn't have protection or guidance over it.

28/04

We have to make it a law in this country because this Bible is here to stay. The law must guide and protect it in this House. We do not know who the next Government will be; a different man with different ideas and new thoughts will come. They can be able to move the Bible out. My concern is that we must include the Bible in our *Constitution*. The Prime Minister once stated that Papua New Guinea is a black Christian nation. Those words must go down in the *Constitution* for the country, it must act as a stepping stone for us leaders and it will be supporting us and helping to develop this country and bring it forward. This is very important for this country. The majority of people in this country are Christians. Sometimes we encounter situations that are beyond our control and we entrust our prayers to maintain this country. When we have the Bible in the House we as leaders can be able to steer the people and the country in the right direction.

Thank you.

Motion – That grievances be noted – agreed to.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honorable members, before I adjourn Parliament, please be advised that the National Identity Registry will be conducting NID for registration for members of Parliament who do not have NID cards in the State Function room from the 19th to the 24th of March 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you have any issue with your NID registration, please visit these staff members so they can attend to your concern.

Honorable members, the Chair would like to wish you a safe weekend and I now adjourn Parliament to 21 March 2023 10 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 1 p.m.