SECOND DAY

Wednesday 7 June 2023

DRAFT HANSARD

Subject:	
	Page No:
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS - STATEMENT BY THE ACTING SPEAK	ER3
CONDOLENCE MOTION – LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR RABBIE NAMALIU, MP – STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER	하기 등을 통하고 하이 말을 수당하고 하다. 당하다는 사람들은 사람들은 사람들이 되었다.
QUESTIONS	
Supplementary Question Special Purpose Authority No Air Niugini Flights to Arona Airport	
No Air Niugini Flights to Aropa Airport	8 9
Criteria For Airport Maintenance Contractors	12
Divulge Gold Bullion Agreement Documentations	12
SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS EVTENDED TIME FOR OUT OF	
Chaplain for Parliament	18
Extend Question Time	18
PERSONAL EXPLANATION	18
DEPARTMENT OF WORKS AND WAR	19
DEPARTMENT OF WORKS AND HIGHWAYS – 2022 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT AND 2023 WORK PLAN – PAPER AND STATEMENT – PAPER NOTED	
DEPARTMENT OF PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL LEVEL GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS 2021, 2022 – PAPER – PAPER NOTED.	
ADJOURNMENT	47
	TO SECTION OF THE SE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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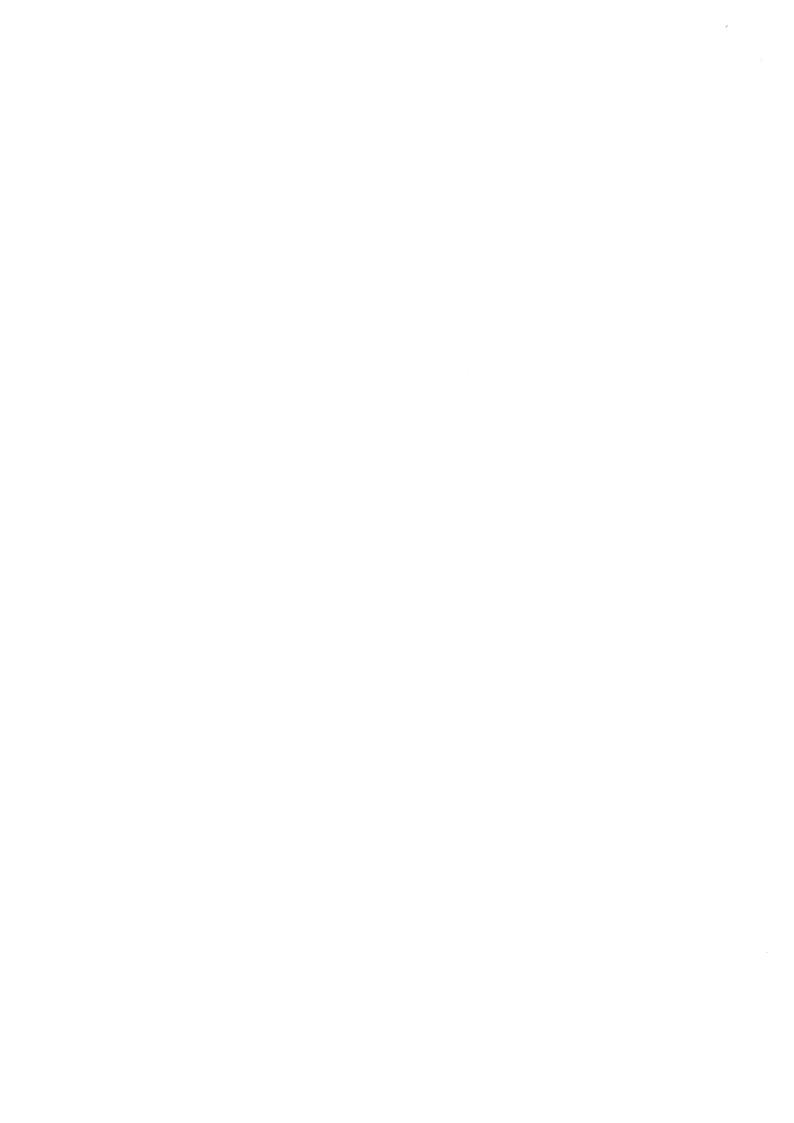
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KENNETH SEBEPMIN

Acting Principal Parliamentary Reporter



SECOND DAY

Wednesday 7 June 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 10.45 a.m., and invited the Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture and the Member for Samarai-Murua, **Honourable Isi Henry Leonard** to say Prayers:

'This moning mipela i lusim olgeta tingting blong mipela, mipela putim arere na mipela i litimapim yu na givim yu honor na glory because yu God na Papa blong mipela. This morning bipo mipela ken bekim any askim blong mipela.

Mipela ino gutpela man, mipela i fail na mipela ino litimapim yu long laif na pasin bilong mipela. That's why mipela askim yu long dispela moning long lusim asua bilong mipela na mipela askim marimari na sore bilong yu.

This moning mipela amamas because yu harim prayer bilong mipela. That is why nau moning taim mipela givim yu request bilong mipela, mipela askim yu this moning humbly that yu stap wantaim mipela, yu go pas wantaim mipela. Because responsibility na duty bilong mipela i bikpela tumas. Hevi we mipela yet i kamapim em i moa yet na mipela yet ino inap karim na stretim. Yu divine intervention mipela painim this moning.

Mipela pray mighty God that yu stap wantaim Praim Minista husait i leader blong dispela country, yu blessim em na halvim em. Bai em i ken wok long go pas long dispela kantri long way na pasin bilong yu.

Wankain tu long Opposition Lida, yu blessim em tu this moning, halvim em, givim em strong na em i ken wokim gutpela wok long kamapim balance long dispela government bilong yu long hia long Papua Nuigini.

Wankain tu long olgeta ministers, members of Parliament, we mipela olgeta stap long hia, mipela seekim spirit tambu bilong yu, long halvim mipela so that mipela olgeta ken wokim wok bilong mipela long servim yu na ol pipol bilong yu long dispela kantri.

This morning mighty God mipela givim bek i kam long yu, Speaker husait bai go pas long dispela meeting, Mighty God yu halvim em. Tete em i ken wokim bikpela wok bilong yu tete long dispela House. That we are all accountable long wanem samting mipela discuss long hia to make this House fair and balance for your people and especially bilong yu.

This morning mipela tenkim yu, bikos yu harim prea bilong mipela. So please blessim mipela wanwan today, blessim ol pipol blong dispela kantri husait i putim iau na ai whether long TV or radio, long wanem samting ol harim. Mighty God, yu blessim ol so that they can understand the truth we em i kamaut long dispela House. So, that ol tu can understandim responsibility bilong ol as pipol, the citizens of this nation, long halvim government, long halvim kantri, na mipela olgeta ken wok wantaim in a very responsible and harmonious manner. So, this country mipela olgeta ken wok wantaim long movim forward for your name sake.

Mighty God blessim mipela wanwan. Amen.

02/02

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS – STATEMENT BY THE ACTING SPEAKER

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honorable Members, I wish to acknowledge the presence in the Public Gallery;

- (a) Members of the Autonomous Bougainville Government,
- (b) Representatives of the Aitape-Lumi electorate, in the West Sepik Province,
- (c) Deacons from the United Reform Church of Gaire village, in Hiri-Koiari electorate, Central Province,
- (d) The students of De La Salle Secondary and Koroboro International School in the National Capital District.

On behalf of the National Parliament, I extend the visitors a warm welcome to the National Parliament.

CONDOLENCE MOTION – LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR RABBIE NAMALIU, GCL, KCMG, CSM, EC, MP – STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr JAMES MARAPE (Tari-Pori-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs) – Mr Acting Speaker, I move –

That this Parliament expresses its deepest regret at the death of the former Member for Kokopo and former Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Late Right Honorable Sir Rabbie Namaliu, GCL, KCMG, CSM, EC and places on record its recognition of his devoted service to the people of Kokopo and Papua New Guinea. and we extend our profound sympathy to his family and the people of East New Britain and of course the greater Papua New Guinea.

Mr Acting Speaker, he was our country's fourth Prime Minister and a notable scholar in his own right before public service and politics. He was the first indigenous lecturer at our first University, the University of Papua New Guinea. He was the third Leader of Pangu Pati, following from Late Grand Chief, Sir Michael Thomas Somare and Sir Paul Lapun.

And so, on behalf of the country and the greater Pangu Pati networks throughout the country, we take this moment and thank you for slotting this moment for us to register our sympathy, being it is the first time Parliament has convened since his passing.

Mr Acting Speaker, I would like to offer our deepest sympathy to his family, his beloved people of Kokopo, his friends and associates.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Motion - That the Condolence Message be noted - agreed to.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – As a mark of respect to the memory of the late honorable gentleman, I invite all honorable members to rise in their places.

(All Members stood in their places to observe a minute of silence)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – I thank the Parliament.

QUESTIONS

Mr KEITH IDUHU – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. Before, I raise my question to the Minister for Inter-Government Relations or should I say Provincial and Local-Level Governments, I also acknowledge my constituents in the Speaker's Gallery this morning.

Mr Acting Speaker, as a way of brief background, the *Organic Law on the Provincial Local-*Level Government Reform was done in 1995, whereby a government structure was realigned and the premiers were replaced by governors, and local-level governments were incorporated into that organic law or the constitutional law.

03/02

Thereby under *Section 98 and 99* of that particular law, the local level government presidents and the provincial governments were given a seat at the table of natural resource allocation.

Whilst the provincial governments are engrossed and I say the Governors are very much engrossed in this development agenda of benefit distribution and therefore privy to the execution of contracts pertaining to development aspirations of project area footprint.

The LLG's although probably signed off, I have not seen one since though, will find themselves in a particular predicament that is a subject of much debate and discussion amongst members of Parliament who are related to project footprint areas.

Mr Acting Speaker, somewhere along the line as a matter of timeline in 1995 this reform was done. In or about 2010; for example, the PNG LNG Gas Project Agreement were signed off. In 2014, the PNC led government brought in the *DDA Act* which recognizes districts as development machineries.

Since that day to now there has been a lot of tussling. In 2014 that *Act* was passed, this year I am informed and readily believe that in 2022, the Hiri SPA for instance, now instead of the LLG receiving benefits, the Hiri Local Level Government for instance and there are many other SPAs who purport to replace the functions and duties of LLG's.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member sorry to interrupt you. We have a problem of raising more comments on the questions and we delay our question time and there's not enough time. Can you please get straight into your questions?

Audit Hiri Special Purpose Authority

Mr KEITH IDUHU – Thank you. Mr Acting Speaker, in 2022 and 2023 substantial sums of money was paid to the Hiri SPA. I will use that as an example.

- (1) Can the Minister produce a report of an audit that has been done for these funds that were distributed to the SPAs, Hiri SPA being one but there are many others? But for our sake, the Hiri SPA is of great concern.
- (2) Is the good Minister also able to produce that report and explain the mandate of the SPAs, its functions and purposes, what it is there to do and why is it functioning in place of LLGs?

Meanwhile, we have the DDAs established and supposedly a developed a machinery that has been sitting there underutilized, who are accountable, who are more in the public realm and who actually report to the DIRD.

- (3) Mr Acting Speaker, is it true also that with the recent payments received by the Hiri SPA instead of roads being fixed; health aid posts being attended to; and water supply to the rural communities being attended to, brand new motor vehicles have been purchased by directors of this so called Hiri SPAs?
- (4) Is it also true that the way forward could be to relook at the existence of the special purpose authorities? What is so special about this special purpose authorities.

Mr Acting Speaker, in conclusion, I want to ask the good Minister to respond to the various queries raised and a progress on the possibility of amending sections 98 and 99 of the Organic Law on Provincial Local Governments so as to enable members of Parliament who have been granted great mandate by the people of each respective constituents to represent, advocate and push the development aspirations.

04/02

Mr SOROI EOE – Mr Acting Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for Hiri-Koiari for this very important question that he has raised. This is important because this case not only applies to Hiri-Koiari but throughout Papua New Guinea where there are projects relating to oil and gas as well as gold and copper in which SPAs exist to provide services to our people.

I am really thankful that the Member has asked this question because I have taken this issue upon myself to address. For a very long time there has been no reports submitted by SPAs throughout Papua New Guinea. There were rumours and stories about hundreds and millions of funds that have disappeared through the SPAs whether they are existing SPAs, legally established or endorsed by landowners and LLGs. SPAs are instruments established by the government basically to do with agreements between developers as well as PNG Government. SPAs were or are the vehicles by which the landowner benefits are channelled through. As I have said, it has been a major problem so far.

Let me now answer question relating to Hiri and I can come back and address the issue that has been a problem area for us. Let me start with the last question that the Honourable Member asked, which is to amend *sections 98* and *99* of the *Organic Law* which hinders or prohibits open members to participate in terms of sharing of benefits. And often in cases, we find that the development projects exist in districts, but the operation of law prohibits open members to have a share in these benefits, hence the problem that has been raised by the Member for Hiri-Koiari.

In answer to that question, I have directed my legal division officers to immediately look into that amendment to sections 98 and 99 of the Organic Law enabling open members to have stronger say in the benefits deriving from the resources from the districts they represent. That issue is underway as it applies to Hiri-Koiari and particularly the Hiri LLG.

The Hiri LLG has undergone a lot of difficulties, I have seen the files. When it was established, the board has gone to different phases of people pushing themselves in and replacing the earlier boards. That problem has been existing for some time and in the vacuum, the funds that have come in from the developers to the National Government which were given for Hiri LLG were then parked with Central Provincial Government. You can imagine what has happened to those funds. So much funds have disappeared. There were some projects that have been done, but all in all, lots of funds have disappeared. It's the same story all over Papua New Guinea.

About a month ago, out of concern, I had issued and circulated instruction asking all SPAs to provide their financial and operational reports. Out of 14 LLG SPAs, eight responded and I have received their reports. Some reports that I have been going through, I am not satisfied because the report does not talk about how the funds were used. So I will be dealing with those SPAs.

Included in that discussion was the Hiri-Koiari SPA. Up until now, I have requested for Hiri-Koiari to give me the report of their operation but they have not done so. So thank you Member, I will be seeking that information from Hiri-Koiari to give account of all the funds that they have received and how they have expended.

I have a personal interest in Hiri, particularly as it applies to the LNG areas because of my association with the project site areas through my marriage to the family. I have been concerned about this particular –

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr SOROI EOE – Well, we are all married so I need to talk about that. Anyways, it is kind of a personal concern for me as well. Currently, I have been told, though I have not seen the figures but I think in the vicinity of about K17 million has been made available to Hiri LLG SPA and I'll be demanding from the management and the Board of Hiri LLG SPA to give me their operational plans.

05/02

You cannot spend money unless you have a plan. If you don't have a plan, you abuse the money. Its right across the board, whether it's a government entity or it's a private sector. we must

have an operational plan. So that is where the problem is and I think that's the reason why and the Member has raised a very crucial issue and that is perhaps where they are now spending the money to buy expensive vehicles. I'll make it my business to deal with this matter. But coming back to the questions, I think some of the questions are already—

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, we have limited time for question time so I will ask you to have a short response to that question.

Mr SOROI EOE – Thank you. As I said, I will make it my business, Honourable Member, to check Hiri LLG SPA and then I will report back to you. Thank you.

Supplementary Question Special Purpose Authority

Mr WILLIAM POWI – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. In PNG, with the question that was asked, we have LLGs as a third tiered government and SPAs are the implementation agencies of the LLGs.

Minister, through Acting Speaker, can you table where SPAs are established in this country? Whom they report to? Because a lot of resources have gone to Special Purpose Authority (SPA) like in my province. I have no visibility on them.

So, I also want to correct you, its not resource projects that have SPAs. SPAs are established by your department through law or NEC's submission to implement projects initiated by LLGs. Whom do they report to?

These are unnecessary structures that are wasting public funds. You already have DDAs, doing DDA plans, implementation, budgeting, you have LLGs sitting out there and Special Purpose Authorities. There's a lot of complaints on this Minister, you need to table where SPAs are established, who empowers them, what are their functions and whom do they report to?

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr SOROI EOE – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker and thank you, Governor. You are right it is through the operation of the *Organic Law* that special purpose authorities were established to ensure that benefits go to the people. But up until now, as I've said, there's no visibility, there's no accountability and I can understand why provincial governments are having difficulty in terms of SPAs being held accountable.

And so my position now is that, I'll be having close consultations with all the leaders where special purpose authorities exist and come up with final position whether or not SPAs should exist. Because up until now, hundreds of millions of funds have disappeared, gone down the drain. Funds which should make serious developmental changes to the lives of our people. It's a great concept. So, my position Governor and members of Parliament, through you, Mr Acting Speaker, is to look at this issue again carefully and find the best alternative in delivering services to our people.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable members, yesterday I asked the Honourable Member for Central Bougainville to reserve his Supplementary Question for today, so today I will give him the chance to ask his question.

Mr SIMON DUMARINU – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. Regarding the question from the Member for Rabaul yesterday. He asked a question regarding the condition of the airport yesterday so I would like to ask about the condition of especially Kieta, Aropa Airport in Central Bougainville. This airport is used by Air Niugini in its flights.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable member, your question is to the Minister for Civil Aviation, right?

No Air Niugini Flights to Aropa Airport

Mr SIMON DUMARINU – Yes, that's right. My question is to the Minister for Civil Aviation. It's a supplementary question from yesterday regarding the condition of Kieta and Aropa Airport.

06/02

I don't know the situation at this point in time but before that Air Niugini would normally fly to Aropa Airport. However, now there are no more flights going there and this basic service has been denied to the people of Bougainville. The other alternative is having Air Niugini flights through Buka but the problem is the road condition in Buka. It has deteriorated and needs major maintenance work on all the road linkages there. I also want the Minister for Works and Implementation to take note as well.

However, my concern is with the lack of Air Niugini flights to Central Bougainville which has really affected this basic service for the people of South and Central Bougainville which in turn has contributed to the deteriorating stages of other development that is needed there.

My questions are:

- (1) Why is Air Niugini not flying to Central Bougainville?
- (2) When exactly will this problem be solved once and for all?

Mr WALTER SCHNAUBELT – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, I also want to thank the Member for Central Bougainville for his questions. I believe the questions are in two parts; one relates to roads, which I won't answer because it comes under the Department of Works and Implementation. I sympathise with you in hearing that the roads have deteriorated at this stage.

In relation to the runway in Aropa Airport, yes, the problem with the runway is the main contributing factor, because on that side of the country, we normally experience a lot of earth tremors. And that has caused some of these fractures that we are now experiencing on the runway in Aropa Airport, resulting in the cancellation of flights. If they ignore these conditions, then this can affect the safe landing of aircrafts therefore causing major accidents.

However, just to give assurance to our good Member, the National Airport Corporation has taken full responsibility of this airport. I will definitely instruct my officers to investigate this matter thoroughly and to find solutions and fix it.

At the same time too, we are caught in between the transition period where we have funding from the Asian Development Bank and Aropa is one of five airports that is included in this maintenance upgrade. We have to decide if funding it now would be effective, or to wait for the tender process to conclude first before submitting the full cost for a major reconstruction of the Aropa Airport, especially the runway.

If the tender process prolongs and there is urgent need for the airport to be in operational sooner, then we can reconsider the cost factors. I will discuss this with appropriate government on the ground to work with NAC just to carry out minor maintenance work only for the airport to be in operation again.

I also want to use this opportunity to make awareness again in relation to the funding from the Asian Development Bank for the Civil Aviation Development Investment Program (CADIP) II

I stand here today to thank the former Minister for Civil Aviation and now the Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, Honourable Don Polye, for introducing this CADIP I Project, through which most of the airports were funded and are now nearing completion. I thank you for your leadership under the then National Alliance-led Government during that time.

I also want to thank the Marape-Rosso Government because we entered into a second tranche of CADIP II, where the Asian Development Bank will be providing K500 million to support all these other airports which missed out on funding from the CADIP I programme.

The total funding is US \$171.5 million and the GoPNG component will be K8.6 million, this totals to K500 million.

Airports that will benefit under the CADIP II project are as follows:

(1) Gurney Airport will receive Asphalt surfacing, new terminal building and associated works; the amount will be decided through the tender process. The tender process has already closed as of 26 May 2023 so we are sorting that out now.

07/02

- (2) Kiunga Airport is another airport that requires pavement strengthening and associated works. The tendering process is on foot right now. It hasn't been finalised as yet.
- (3) Arowa Airport, the airport pavement strengthening, new terminal building and associated works. The procurement process is still happening right now as we speak.
 - (4) For Wewak Airport, the runway extension, new terminal building and associated works.
 - (5) For Hosking Airport, Asphalt surfacing and associated works.
- (6) and some other additional works on the Jacksons International Airport in terms of power and airfield lighting upgrade to make sure that Jacksons Airport is adequate enough to take night flights.
 - (7) There are four rural airports that they will be looked at and given support.
- (8) There will be two new control towers for PNG News Sky Pacific. We are planning to build a new tower at Nazab Airport to assist the newly upgraded terminal at Nadzab.

Mr Belden Namah – Point of Order! Mr Acting Speaker, can you ask the Minister to incorporate that in a ministerial statement? He has already answered the question of the Member for Central Bougainville.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member for Vanimo-Green, your Point of Order is in order. Honourable Minister, thank you for the information that you have given. If you can incorporate that in your statement later.

Mr WALTER SCHNAUBELT – Thank you, Acting Speaker. I do not want to get additional questions from others regarding airports so I thought I'll just make it public now and get it done with once and for all, but if you want me to stop I'll stop.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, I have already entertained the Point of Order and ruled in favour of it that you include your explanations in your ministerial statement later. I will now stop you from continuing with your reply and I'll ask for a new question.

Supplementary Question

Criteria For Airport Maintenance Contractors

Mr EREMAN TOBAINING Jnr – Thank you, Acting Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister again. I think the question that the Member for Rabaul raised yesterday was in two parts. He has answered the first part but he has not answered the part on the criteria for awarding contracts.

Tokua Airport was upgraded and it has a newly reconstructed runway for almost a year. Can the Minister inform the House on what type of criteria is being used to award contracts to the contractors? I have visited the runway and saw that the Asphalt or premix surfacing had cracks because the thickness of that Bitumen on the runway is not 150 or 250 millilitres thick. That's why when it absorbs a lot of heat from the sun, it melts and cracks up the runway.

(1) Can the Minister inform the people of East New Britain on when the Fokker-100 aircraft will land in the province?

Because this also affected Bougainville. When they downgrade all the flights, we are badly affected, especially in the New Guinea Islands.

(2) What type of criteria is being used to award contracts to the contractors?

In addition, we must award contracts to those experienced contractors so that they can build better runways rather than wasting money on inexperienced contractors who have done low quality work which can deteriorate after a couple of months.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr WALTER SCHNAUBELT – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker for allowing me to stand again and I thank the Honourable Member for Kokopo for his question.

On the engineering aspects of it, I am not sure but I'm happy to get some information for you in relation to that but normally the engineering will be based on the size of the aircrafts that will land on that runway.

08/02

If the aircraft is heavy, then the Asphalt has to be a lot thicker to carry the weight. So, this is the engineering aspect and I don't have much knowledge on it but I am happy to get some detailed information if the Member agrees.

But in relation to get Tokua Airport up and running, the best solution is to patch the runway to restore the operations quickly. Let me remind all of us that the runway was completed back in 1998. As per the advice of the contractor or engineering component of managing runways such as Tokua there has to be maintenance support every three years. Now unfortunately, that may not have happened since 1998 and we have many earth tremors in Rabaul and that doesn't help and so we have this current situation.

So, I just want to make it clear to all of us that the tarmac on the runway at Tokua has deteriorated over time because the last completion of work was done in 1998. But I'm happy to announce that the Marape-Rosso Government has looked into it. We are having discussions with ADB right now as we speak to look for separate funding to attend to Tokua Airport immediately. Obviously, that's going be a process that we need to follow in terms of getting approval from ADB funding.

Mr Francis Alua – Point of Order! Mr Acting Speaker, the good Minister for Civil Aviation continues to mislead this Parliament. The question raised by the Member for Kokopo was; 'what requirements or criteria was used to award contracts to companies that are sealing airport runways in this country'. And he is not answering the question so, perhaps he could answer the question being put forward by the good Member for Kokopo.

Thank you.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member your point of order is in order. I think the Honourable Minister you have already answered the question by giving the aspect of the engineering work. So, I would ask you to sum up your reply to that question and we move on.

Thank you.

Mr WALTER SCHNAUBELT – I'm happy to get detailed information for that specific question, if you like and I have no problem with it. Like I said, I'm not an engineer and many of us sitting here are not engineers but I'm happy to look into that matter and give you specifics.

But let me stress this, please, NAC is part of the process to determine the contractor of the runway and terminal. How contracts are awarded to contractors is entirely dependent on themselves? We already know the problem of the National Airport Corporation which I have been challenged with ever since I have been appointed as Minister. Because of those bad decisions, I have removed some people and brought in credible people.

So Mr Acting Speaker, I am hoping that from here on proper decision will be made, proper allocations on the best contract will be made and we are hoping to get better results for these tender processes and contracts for our airports.

Thank you, very much.

Divulge Gold Bullion Agreement Documentations

Mr JOSEPH LELANG – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. My question without notice is directed to the Prime Minister and it is a short one.

Mr Acting Speaker, the gold bullion agreement which was negotiated, drafted and driven by the government has been brought before the National Court by a private citizen. And the National Court has ordered for the full details and disclosure of the government-owned company and vehicle that was registered off shore and its share agreements to be made public.

Mr Acting Speaker, my questions to the Prime Minister are related to this; will the Prime Minister divulge copies of the agreement and Cabinet submissions decisions, the company details and all negotiation?

Mr Richard Masere – Point of Order! Mr Acting Speaker, the matter is now before the court and it is improper for the Prime Minister to preempt any findings on this House until determination is done by the court.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

09/02

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honorable Member, the matter has been before the court, and the National Court has already made a decision on that so it doesn't stop the Opposition Leader to ask the question.

The question can still be asked by the Opposition Leader.

Mr JOSEPH LELANG – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER - Opposition Leader, I think we have another Point of Order.

Mr PILA NININGA – Point of Order! The National Court has made a decision, however, the matter is proceeding on to appeal. They have made an appeal so it will not be right for discussion.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honorable Minister, as a concern of Parliament, I have been informed by the Clerk that we have not received any notice of the appeal so I will still allow the Opposition Leader to go ahead and ask the question.

Mr JOSEPH LELANG - Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, like I said it is a simple question.

Mr Acting Speaker, will the Prime Minister make available copies of the Agreement, the NEC Submission, the NEC Decisions, the company details, and all negotiations and actions the Government has taken and have it tabled in this House for scrutiny in line with the National Court Decision?

This should include information relating to the owners of the company, shareholding arrangement, why this company was registered in Singapore, and whether is it private or publicly listed. There are so many questions that need answers.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker and I also would like to thank the Opposition Leader for asking these questions as a matter of public interest. Whilst the Chairman of the Public Accounts and Minister for Justice feels that the matter is before the Court, I acknowledge your ruling. The Court has cleared this matter but the State has not yet filed an appeal so as a matter of public interest, questions need to be asked, and responded to. I am certainly pleased to make a few replies to the questions.

But, firstly, let me acknowledge our leaders from Bougainville who are here in the Chamber with us. Bougainville is a special region in our country and we are going into the process of deciding on a political settlement consistent with the *Constitution* of our country.

I think we are considering a possible Ministerial Statement by the Minister for Bougainville and the Bougainville Issues. The statement is not ready as yet but I would like to assure our leaders from Bougainville that the Bougainville Peace Process Agreement since 2001 is an important process that this Government and this Parliament will be taking carriage of.

Our program was clearly defined in the Kokopo and Wabag Post Referendum Consultations and the Era Kone signings that we did sign upon between both sides.

So to the leaders of Bougainville, thank you for gracing us with your presence today. We will certainly take note of your presence and I look forward to meeting with you all after the Session.

Now, going back to the gold bullion issue, let me inform the House that whatever relevant information the country needs to know especially on matters surrounding the company, the proponent, and the business case will be put to the public. But, because the Opposition Leader has asked these questions, whatever is relevant and consistent with the law for us to share with the public, we will do so as the public is entitled to have knowledge of a substantial matter like this.

Just a little bit of advice through the Chair that the Attorney-General and the Department of Justice are looking at going to court on the aspect of Cabinet processes being questioned midlife without the processes being fully dispensed with. I think that this is an issue not only for the Marape-Rosso Government but even going forward. So we need to be clear on what is the right time anyone can file a reference on such matters.

10/02

I want to assure this House and the country, the processes of Cabinet is contestable but it must come at an appropriate time whether before or after not midlife through. The Government is to work and dispense government policies that must be progressed. Therefore, that aspect will be relooked at, but we're considering the judgement because court orders are court orders. And we will consider the judgement and in respect to the court order, relevant information that the court has requested that can be now considered, viewed or made public for public interest. Especially matters relating to the structure of the gold bullion business that we want to enter into. Who owns shares? How does Papua New Guinea benefit?

Mr Acting Speaker, you know very well that the Government on this side is a pronationalistic government. Any work we do is to get more for our country, period. Nothing less, but everything more for our country under the existing legislative framework we have. And anything we can push to get back more, we are pushing; so the gold bullion will be structured in such a way. The intention to move into gold bullion, gold refinery will be structured in a way that it is not harmful to existing industries and their contracts. That it is not harmful to existing players or businesses in the industry but make it more accountable. Just like we're trying to account for how many timber harvests we make in our country, how many fish harvests we make in our country. Unbeknownst to many of us, individuals are smuggling gold out big time.

For those who are in the registered big investment harvest that is going on like Lihir, Porgera, Ok Tedi and Harmony, we have now for the first time, since we took office, via a simple amendment to the *Mining Act*, have a data registry link at MRA. And for the first time now we can know exactly what is happening in the processing centre in Lihir, in Porgera which will be opened very soon, Ok Tedi, our own state mine and we will now setup that in Ramu Nickel and all mining in our country for greater accountability.

This gold bullion conversation is about accountability for all gold processed and produced in our country so that we can tax proper. Landowners can benefit proper and not operate in shady environment where there is no greater light or scrutiny in the gold business.

And so I give you full assurance, Mr Acting Speaker; the Opposition Leader has asked a very important question for the country to know in full detail. If there has not been any clarity on this one, I do apologize but it is not a policy that is programmed to syphon off benefits for Papua New Guineans, rather it is structured to get more benefit from us.

The current proponents, they have been in and out of the country for the last 10 or so years, from what I've been advised. The proposal earlier that was noted, was a 30 per cent proposal to us and a 70 per cent proposal to them. We're now looking at a better arrangement similar to the one with Porgera where we get 51 per cent equity and the investors get 49 per cent equity. Where we do not pay for equity but we participate in the cost of re-startup at not 51 but at 36 per cent.

Mr Acting Speaker, I want to inform you and this House, James Marape is all about fighting for greater interest of our country from our resources. That is the mark of difference between me and others in the past. I will inform this House proper on what this gold refinery and gold bullion policy is all about so you will know.

I want to give assurance to you Acting Speaker and the Opposition Leader; we are not in a rush. We want to get this. It is a big step in all our downstream processing focuses. Gold downstream is the biggest; that is the highest and we are not in a rush but to do it proper. This proposal has been on foot for the last 10 to 12m years. It came in when the O'Neil Government was in office.

We structured it so that it is a win for the small people who own the gold resources. Our existing alluvial miners including some of the biggest traders, I'm doing it for them and not for anyone else. They are already in the gold business and for us to account for the gold so that it doesn't walk off in suitcases and brief cases away from scrutiny and the state losing out on revenue from what is our inherent right and resources. Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – EXTENDED TIME FOR QUESTIONS

Motion (by Mr Wake Goi) put -

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent the time for questions this day being extended by 20 minutes.

There being no absolute majority, motion not carried.

Mr WAKE GOI - I ask leave of the Chair to direct a question to you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Leave is granted.

Mr WAKE GOI – My three questions are;

Chaplain for Parliament

I request if this Parliament could have a chaplain that can be put here to lead us in devotion to pray with us and our staffs.

Medical Insurance for MPs

I would like an update to be given on the medical insurance for our 118 Members of Parliament, not today but maybe this week or next week.

Extend Question Time

I would also like the Chair to extend the 45 minutes' question time to 60 minutes so we do not go into extension but we can run through to finish 60 minutes of question time.

Thank you.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member, your question is noted by the Chair and we will respond in the coming days of session.

Honourable Members, our question time has lapsed. I believe the Member for Moresby-South has an explanation to make.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr JUSTIN TKATCHENKO (Moresby-South) – I ask leave of the Chair to make a personal explanation.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER - Do you claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr JUSTIN TKATCHENKO - Yes, Sir!

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Go ahead, leave is granted.

Mr Belden Namah – Point of Order! Mr Acting Speaker, this House is the house of 'useless people and primitive animals'. Why is this stranger being allowed and given parliamentary privileges to make a statement? He made a statement to an international media, he should not be allowed to make a statement today. He should resign in disgrace and get out of this Parliament.

Mr Acting Speaker, he should not be allowed to speak in this Parliament.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member for Vanimo-Green, in respect to your Point of Order, it is out of order. The Honourable Member for Moresby-South is an Honourable Member of this House elected by the people of Moresby-South and he is still a member. He has sought leave of the Chair and has been granted to do a personal-explanation so I will allow him to make a statement.

Mr JUSTIN TKATCHENKO – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker and the Members of this Honourable House for this opportunity to speak today. A lot has been said in the media and social media over recent weeks and the people of our nation want to know the truth of what was said and how it was intended and how this was manipulated and what was actually meant by my words.

12/02

I made comments in a media interview that was targeted at what was better known as social media trolls. They are faceless people who spend their days on social media hiding behind false names. They say the most disgusting things and make the vilest threats on social media.

Mr Acting Speaker, regardless of any office that I represent or position that I might hold, above all else in life, first and foremost, I am a father of my children and when I saw the vile and

disgusting things stated and said about my daughter, I did have a burst of blind fury at these horrible individuals. These disgusting individuals, some in PNG as well as in Australia, the UK and other places were making sexual threats against my daughter. Threatened her in a manner of disgusting remarks. I speak with every parent in this house and every parent of this nation and seek your understanding of how angry and frustrated I was and still am at these trolls. If anyone in our country thought this was somehow a blanket statement about our people, that is completely wrong.

And I apologise as it was not in that context. In your heart of hearts, I simply ask every citizen to ask yourself how could I ever say such a thing about our people. We are also talking about my six beautiful children and my family who are my life. How could anyone believe for me to have such thoughts because they could never be true. My words and comments against these disturbing people were twisted and manipulated for their own political and personal gain. So again, I apologise for the way my words were misinterpreted.

In light of this misunderstanding, I did the most honourable thing by stepping aside as Minister for Foreign Affairs, putting my country first so as to clear the confusion on this matter. I thank the Prime Minister and Cabinet colleagues for their understanding and accepting this decision in doing so. At this point in time, I'm also cooperating with the appropriate authorities on this issue so as to clear any misunderstandings.

Mr Acting Speaker, it's a whole new world we are living in today. The internet and all the benefits it gives to the world and the threats this also carries. I know the *TikTok* video that my daughter posted was not appropriate. As a parent, this is something that many of us go through as we guide our children through their early stages of life. I can truly say that the situation that has transpired teaches us a lesson on the dangers of the internet, especially how there is a lack of accountability from people that abuse it.

Finally, Mr Acting Speaker, I love this country, the Independent state of Papua New Guinea and all that this country stands for and the hopes that it offers to our people. So, to our nation, I say to you, that I am sorry for any misunderstanding. Papua New Guinea is my home, it is my heart and is the place where one day, I will be laid to rest.

13/02

I will serve the people of this great nation in anyway that is asked of me. I will represent the people of Moresby South as their mandated leader, a Member in this House for as long as they wish for me to do so. I thank them all for their overwhelming support and love during this difficult time. I am a proud Papua New Guinean and always will be. From my heart, I apologise to any of

our people who misinterpreted my words which were only spoken against those hateful people in the protection of my daughter.

I thank you Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Members, there will be no debates on the statement presented by the Honourabe Member for Moresby-South.

DEPARTMENT OF WORKS AND HIGWAYS – 2022 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT AND 2023 WORK PLAN – PAPER AND STATEMENT – PAPER NOTED

Mr SOLAN MIRISIM (Telefomin – Minister for Works and Highways) – I present the following Paper pursuant to Statute:

Connect PNG Programme Financing and Implementation.

I ask leave of the Parliament to make a statement in connection with the Paper.

Leave granted.

Mr Acting Speaker, thankyou for giving me this opportunity to provide an update on the progress of financing and implementation of the Marape-Rosso governments flagship, connect PNG economic roads, infrastructure development programme.

Mr Acting Speaker, before I do so let me firstly acknowledge the Prime Minister, Honourable James Marape, ministers of State, our provincial governors, and members of Parliament for the ongoing support for this important road development and sustainability programme for PNG.

Mr Acting Speaker, PNG's roads will continue to be essential to the country's socioeconomic development as they facilitate 85 per cent of the movement of passengers and freight.

Roads facilitate development of much of the natural resources as well as the development and movement of more cash crops in the country. In recognition of this, the key economic growth goal of the Medium-Term Development Plan Three is to improve infrastructure with sustainable

and disaster resilient quality to provide more enabling environment for growth of the economy and for the improvement of service delivery.

14/02

However, much of the existing road networks were built between the 1950s-1970s to connect relatively low number of people and places and despite significant improvements in recent years, many roads remain in a poor condition and remain unconnected to major economic hubs, constraining trade, business, and the delivery of essential government services to PNG's citizens.

The overall cost of poor roads in PNG is estimated to be growing at K750 million per year in road replacement costs as well as climate-induced weather-related emergency restoration works borne by the State as the asset owner and another K460 million per year on road traffic accidents, delay costs and wear and tear costs borne by the vehicle operators and road users around the country.

As a result of the underdeveloped and run-down conditions of the country's road network, decreased road accessibility is a bottleneck to government's aspirations to diversify and grow the economy to K200 billion mark in the next 10 years.

Mr. Acting Speaker, considering the long-term impacts of declining conditions of the country's road network, the Marape-Rosso government's ongoing Connect PNG Economic Transport Infrastructure Development Programme 2020-2040 aims to build and maintain 16,000 kilometres of roads consisting of national highways, missing links, bridges, provincial and districts roads throughout PNG at an estimated investment cost of K20 billion.

Mr Acting Speaker, the government's medium term plan is that by 2027, we must upgrade and improve to highway standard 4,200 kilometres of the 16 priority national highways in PNG and open up 1,800 kilometres missing links including the Trans-Island Highway to meet the overall vision of government to create a single uninterrupted national road network that will for the first time connect the Momase and the Highlands regions into Port Moresby in the Southern Region on the main land PNG.

For the New Guinea Islands region, the East and West New Britain provinces will be connected with a proper two-lane highway standard road that can facilitate other cultural development as the two provinces have huge developmental potential.

Mr Acting Speaker, the work on upgrading and improving 4,200 kilometres of strategic economic highways in PNG has commenced and will reach K3.5 billion by 2027.

The highways will be upgraded and improved to two-lane national highway standard and these highways includes Hiritano, Magi, East-West New Britain, Boluminski, Manus, Highlands

Highway, and Sepik Coastal Highway serving the main economic corridor highways. These highways provide critical linkages for major portion of the 85 per cent freight and passenger movements in the affected provinces and regions.

We have until now completed 2,500 kilometres between 2019-2022 to bring it to a total of 50 per cent 'good' condition from 12 per cent in 2014 of the target length of the national roads network at a total record capital expenditure of K1.354 billion.

Mr Acting Speaker, unlike before, road users can now experience improved conditions on the main highways for the first time. In keeping pace with the medium term investment targets, there are more than K3 billion worth of multi-year maintenance and capital works contracts that are running at the moment and another K2 billion worth of works at design and tender stage.

15/02

Mr Speaker, an important part of the Connect PNG program is to construct 1,900 kilometres of missing link roads to standard class 3 for K200 million per annum starting in the 2023 Budget to reach Kl billion by 2027.

Mr Acting Speaker, the target for phase one is to construct 633 kilometres out of the 1100 kilometres, we have constructed 362 kilometres an almost 57 per cent achievement. We are on track to deliver the 633 kilometres for phase 1 by 2027. Finschhafen, Karamui, Telefomin where my electorate is and Menyamya with a population of more than one million people who are yet to be connected by road will be connected by 2027.

The key agenda is to complete and open the Trans-Island Highway by 2025 coinciding with the 50th Independence jubilee of our country. It will importantly link Port Moresby and Lae, followed by Goroka, Madang, Mount Hagen, Wewak, Mendi and Tari on the mainland; on what is going to be the first undivided single road network.

Mr Acting Speaker, the other missing link roads include Southern Highlands-Gulf Highway, Central to Milne Bay Highway, East-West New Britain Highway, Baiyer- Madang Highway, Gulf Highway, (Kerema – Kikori), Fisika road (Lae to Finschhafen), Madang-Gulf Highway (Gumine-Karamui, Purari), Trans-Fly Border Highway, South Coast Pomio to Kimbe, missing link from Kiunga to Aiambak, Tabubil in Western Province to Telefomin in West SepikProvince missing link and the Trans-Fly Border highway from Oriomo Daru Coast to Wipim Ssstation all the way to Mohead.

Mr Acting Speaker, once the program is funded and implemented successfully, it will stimulate economic growth and create sustainable autonomous growth zones that will ultimately increase per capita incomes in the currently unreached and underdeveloped remote regions and districts with huge development potential like Menyamya, Finschhafen, Telefomin, and Karamui districts.

Mr Acting Speaker, provincial and district roads are important as they serve 85 per cent of our rural population. We have allowed for 9,000 kilometres of provincial and district economic roads to be delivered in partnership with the subnational authorities to rural standard at K300 million annually between 2023 and 2027.

Mr Acting Speaker, this will include upgrading and improvement of major material road network for the regional cities of Mt. Hagen, Port Moresby, Kokopo and Lae and other major towns to urban road standard in partnership with local authorities in the provinces and districts to provide rural population the opportunity to grow the rural economy and encourage investments with improved access to markets, service hubs and industrial centers.

Mr Acting Speaker, our government has spent to date Kl.296 billion from 2019 to 2022 with the equivalent completion of 1,066 kilometres of roads and brought to good condition out of the target of 3,000 kilometres which is 35.53 per cent achievement.

16/02

Mr Acting Speaker, we are on track to bring to good condition 3,000 kilometers of the provincial and district economic roads by 2027.

There has been heavy rain and flood-related emergencies recently, mainly in the southern region affecting rural accessibility for our locals and communities. Our provincial works managers have been directed to work with the local authorities to respond to these emergencies and restore full access by this week.

Mr Acting Speaker, under the Connect PNG Project, we are also upgrading and replacing 3,000 metres of overdue bridge structures to the required design standards and mitigating climate change risks on the main highways. This component also includes 2,000 metres of rural standard bridges on the rural roads to increase rural access for the rural population. The total cost will be K1 billion at K200 million per annum between 2023 and 2027.

Our government has spent K195.57 million over the last four years with a corresponding achievement of 165 bridges equating to 3000 metres completed on the rural roads and 591.44 metres on the national highways.

Mr Acting Speaker, we are implementing major replacements and upgrading 71 major bridges on the Highlands Highway to standard two lanes and another 2000 metres of rural bridges program for the remainder of the program.

Mr Acting Speaker, because of my department's overreaching role and responsibility for roads and bridges; every time a road or bridge is in a crisis situation, those affected do not call the district development authority, the provincial governments, nor the Department of National Planning and Monitoring, where all the funding for the sub-national roads and bridges are held; instead, the affected people call the Department of Works and Highways. Likewise, you the Members of Parliament bring your grievances concerning your roads and bridges every time to me.

Mr Acting Speaker, my department is not given the funds for the sub-national roads and bridges so my appeal to those agencies holding onto funds for roads and bridges is to work with my department to deliver those projects at the approved and expected standards.

Mr Acting Speaker, Connect PNG is not business as usual" as many naysayers and critics are saying out there. Our government is rethinking the way enabling economic infrastructure development projects should be funded and delivered. We are looking beyond the short-term needs to build better roads to meet future long-term demands throughout the whole of Papua New Guinea.

Mr Acting Speaker, in order to achieve these outcomes, the government is focused on more evidence-based investment to get more and better quality infrastructure for less cost.

The government has allocated under the ADB loan K100 million funding for proper design and feasibility studies as a compulsory requirement to ensure that large investment costs on big economic highways starting with the Momase Corridor and Trans-Island Highway Corridor meet the economic and technical viability standards and tests.

Mr Acting Speaker, guaranteed long-term funding is a key success factor to roll out the Connect PNG Program in a timely manner.

Mr Acting Speaker, in recognizing the ongoing under-funding issues and its impact on the program targets, the Marape-Rosso Government in line with the funding of 2021 has committed K7 billion for the remainder of phase one from 2023 to 2027 to achieve the program targets.

Mr Acting Speaker, the Government's Connect PNG Program is now underpinned by the Connect PNG Implementation and Funding Act 2021 which ensures a guaranteed long-term stream of funding over the life of the program.

17/02

Mr Acting Speaker, the key provision in this act is to allocate a minimum of 5.6 per cent in annual budget for the programme period out of the total revenue forecasted in the budget.

Mr Acting Speaker, let me also highlight here that the programme covers all four regions, all provinces and all districts of the country including the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

Mr Acting Speaker, for the first time there is equal distribution of road projects and funding to all regions to give equal economic opportunity to everyone, leaving no one behind.

Mr Acting Speaker, let me also acknowledge and recognise our donors and development partners who are contributing more than 50 per cent of the capital expenditure from loans and grants funding from the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, Australian Aid, Japanese Aid through JICA, Chinese Exim Bank, Tax Credit Scheme from our project areas and Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility Loan and Indian Exim Bank.

Mr Acting Speaker, the funding support from our donors and partners come with strong governance and management structures to ensure long-term funding is guaranteed and more importantly, expenditure is strictly for the intended purpose. As a result, projects funded under the loans and grants are completed in a timely manner meeting the required scope and standards.

Mr Acting Speaker, the Connect PNG Program is about building roads now to secure the economic future of PNG, to make PNG become a middle income earning country by 2040. Unfortunately, the future is still a long road ahead with many challenges to overcome and is therefore important for us to work together.

Mr Acting Speaker, it is like the promised land of milk and honey that was not served on a golden plate as promised to the children of Israel but was created by the children of Israel themselves through sheer determination and hard work.

Mr Acting Speaker, as far as, infrastructure-related development is concerned, Papua New Guinea is at a critical juncture to build reliable infrastructure that must drive value and the economic future for our people.

Mr Acting Speaker, the implementation of the Connect PNG Program is critically important for PNG and requires timely and adequate funding resources to ensure program targets and milestones are achieved in a timely manner.

Mr Acting Speaker, the sub-national road authorities are supported by increased funding through the Department of National Planning and Monitoring and technical support from the Department of Works and Highways.

Mr Acting Speaker, the overall administration, political and financial decentralization requires proper capacity and resources to implement devolved management and maintenance responsibilities, so that this will be done gradually over time in line with capacity growth.

Mr Acting Speaker, to ensure an orderly transfer of powers and accountability, road management performance agreements are being signed between the Department and each province

and each district. There is already a partnership framework with clear demarcation of roads and responsibilities between Department of Works and Highways and the sub national authorities. For this arrangement to work, budget funding must be aligned and distributed fairly rather than the current centralised system.

Mr Acting Speaker, in conclusion, if the government is to transform PNG from a low income country to a middle-income country and improve the country's ranking on the human development index, it cannot be 'business as usual'.

18/02

We must prioritize our expenditure areas so that PNG's scarce funding resources can achieve maximum impact on the economy and the lives of the people. The Connect PNG Programme is one of such priorities the government must fund fully. With 100 per cent road connectivity, PNG shall never be the same again.

Connecting the unconnected and reaching the unreached, is a must for me as the Minister for Works and Highways. Under phase 1, work on the national highways and the trans-national and the Central-Milne Bay missing link roads is progressing well so that they are completed in order for our people from the Momase, Highlands regions and Milne Bay Province to drive to Port Moresby and celebrate PNG's 50th Golden Jubilee in 2025.

Yes, together we can do it for PNG and her people. With that, let me assure Parliament and our people that it's the roads that grows the economy. Connect PNG is real. Support the Department of Works and Highways and this Government so that we can deliver the Connect PNG by 2020-2040.

Thank you.

Motion (by Mr Luther Wenge) agreed to –

That the Parliament take note of the statement.

Mr LUTHER WENGE (Morobe) – Mr Acting Speaker, from the outset, I want to thank the Honourable Minister for Works for the presentation and the preparation of the statement in relation to the roads and the bridges that the government has a mission to deliver to Papua New Guinea. He previously gave a detailed statement and I commend him. In this case today, he has complemented with the ones that he has missed in his previous statement and I commend him for that.

Mr Acting Speaker, I was a young lawyer in 1984 to 1990 in the public service. Today, there is a sacculation of lawyers in the public service. There are so many. In my days, there were few lawyers in the public sector and we had to travel within the breadth of this country and I had the benefit of landing in all of the districts of Papua New Guinea, except the Island of Bougainville.

We travelled far and wide by the sea transport to help and defend the people who were charged and accused of committing crimes. I know this country very well. This country is full of very steep mountains and big rivers to cross. It is a country of crowds and it is difficult to land at places because of bad weather, and this also made it difficult for the people that lived in those lands, their traditional lands.

Land is an integral part of their life so they continue to exist on that land. It doesn't matter if roads don't reach them or jetties and wharves have not been built, or the difficulty they face. They will continue to live on their lands in this present time.

19/02

Mr Acting Speaker, I can understand and I bear the hardships that the consecutive governments of this country faced to deliver roads to the length and the breadth of this country. And with the kina devaluation, the value is really down and to get machines from overseas to help us to construct the roads and bridges is a very expensive exercise. This country and this Government continues to face this dilemma.

Mr Acting Speaker, I'd like to humbly commend the Minister. He is a great minister, he persevered through thick and thin, travelling the length and the breadth of this country, physically with his staff. Because from the reports that he presented to Parliament, having read them and perused them, I'm satisfied that he, actually physically, really and truly travelled this country. You've travelled them and when you plan to connect the road, to places never connected by road, where the people live, Minister, you've got the country at heart.

This Government has the country at its heart. With the little resources you are targeting the road construction, construction of bridges to those areas where the people live. Where the people don't want to come out, they want to live there and the government will bring the road there. Government will construct the bridge to get there to help them develop their places.

And your slogan, 'Connecting the unconnected, and reaching the unreached' is the right slogan. You want to touch those places. For instance, Mr Acting Speaker, in Morobe province, we have to connect the road from 14-mile to Silisili then to Langema to Siwi to Menyamya to Kaintiba and down to the Gulf province. That's where the people live, that's where the good valleys exist and we have to connect the road there. You got that in your plan, Mr Minister.

I see it and I've been to some places like Telefomin, I landed there in your district, you were not a member yet, I was a young lawyer, I went to defend one fellow there and I know Telefomin is a difficult part of the country and we need to build a road there. And you are trying to get the road connected to Telefomin, these are hard-working people. You want to connect the road there.

Mr Acting Speaker and some of the tough places in this country, from Kikori all the way to Southern Highlands, nice valley there, big thick forest, fertile land that we have to develop. I've flew over those places, and I saw it.

And Sepik, I once told that Sepik is full of swamps and had no land there, when I was small growing up and learning from the little geography lessons that I learned at high school. But when I went to Sepik, it's had a big valley, my goodness, the biggest valley there. And I'm sure you're going to help to connect the road, I can see it in your plan. And all the other places that you mentioned in your statement that you provided here.

Mr Acting Speaker, he's got it right. Those places need to be connected by road. He's got it right and I fully endorse it. The only issue is that we will try our best.

I would like to at this juncture thank the donors, who have come in to help us; the Australian Government and Japanese Government, the Chinese Government and the monetary organisations who will provide money. The country is there but the international monetary organisations who will come in to give us money either as a donation, either it's a grant with its conditions of repayment.

20/02

All these monetary organisations come in to help and I fully support you, we must thank them and comply with their conditions set out because it's their money collected in the form of tax from the hard-working citizens of their country. With the wisdom of their government, they are trying to help our government by providing services to our people.

Therefore, we must comply with the conditions that they set, we can't run away with it because its their money and to we can't misuse it. They sympathise with us in trying to help us therefore we must comply with the conditions set.

Mr Acting Speaker and Minister, I fully concur with you.

Mr Acting Speaker, the second mission is to deliver roads to places where there is economic potential.

For instance, in the Garaina Valley in the province that I administer, there is no road linking Garaina yet but the valley has huge potential for agriculture purposes. We grow tea there and in actual fact, the tea grown in the Waghi Valley was first grown there. The nursery of tea was done

in Garaina Valley and later transported up to the highlands. But never mind, not to argue about that because they are growing it well for the benefit of this country. But Garaina Valley has a huge potential there.

The road connection from Morobe to Northern then onto Central Province will enable the people to utilise their valley. I can see that the road connecting from Morobe to Saidor and onto Madang, that portion of the road will link up with one of the good valleys called Nanaia Singorkai, it has huge agriculture potential as well.

Mr Minister, if the road connects through the valley, then the people are going to venture into planting of crops and raising of livestock to sell and earn money.

Mr Acting Speaker, it's the wisdom of the National Government through the Minister for Works and Highway to connect all the missing road links to where there is economic potential. I commend you fully from my heart on what you are doing, and to the Marape-Rosso-led Government for your mission to link all the missing road link to the economic potential is a salient proposal and I fully commend for it.

Whilst on that we also need to construct big bridges. For instance, from Lae to Finschhafen and onto to Wasu and all the way to Madang, it may maybe costly but without the bridges you can't cross a big river to the other side.

I can see that this Government is trying to marry the bridge and road program together to full fill the Connect PNG program. If we fully construct the missing road links and construct big bridges then we will fully connect PNG.

The other Papuan provinces starting from Abau to Milne Bay, I have travelled these roads, and seas, and flew in airplanes; these places have very difficult geography to construct roads before. But today you have a plan to connect them with roads so I thank you.

21/02

And all the other places from Bereina all the way to Goilala. They are very difficult places in the country. I travel to those places by helicopter once in two weeks to Goilala and I must tell you that there are a lot of people living in there. There is also an economic potential in Goilala so you must build a road from Lae to Goilala, from Garaina to Lae and then from Goilala to Popondetta in the Northern Province. It's a difficult place but people live there. They are hardworking people and you just have to build their roads. You will see the conversion of their hard work on their soil utility in tilling the land and they will produce economic development for themselves and for this country.

Mr Acting Speaker, I hope that the Minister will add that one in. If there are others that you have not added, I am telling you to add them.

For the road maintenance, I want to commend the Mr Minister for the Lae roads. The city roads in Lae are not for Luther Wenge alone, they are for Papua New Guinea. So, with that in mind, you are doing it.

I had fought for 12 years to get the concrete roads commenced in Lae city. Mr Minister, I am talking about a fight I fought when you were not in here. I'd like to commend the former Prime Minister for Papua New Guinea, Honourable Peter O'Neill for commencing the concrete road. Now, Mr Minister you are coming to complete it and I thank you for that on behalf of the people of Morobe and Papua New Guinea.

The Member for Lae and Deputy Prime Minister is physically seeing that these things are done and I congratulate and thank you on this Floor of the Parliament. Seeing the completion of the concrete roads and the completion of the Lae-Nadzab to Erap River four lane road. Thank you.

The Minister must make sure that our Chinese partners complete the road. They are Chinese, they love money so when they see money, they will complete the road. You got to make sure that they get the money to get the job done. So, Mr Minister, you have done it well.

In saying that, I want to conclude my contribution in this debate. Apart from the construction of the roads by bulldozers, graders and other earthmoving machineries, apart from the construction of bridges by those equipment, I want to recommend some ideas for the infrastructure that we need to have and one of which is the railway.

Mr Acting Speaker, I recommend a railway from Lae to Ramu and eventually you can extend it to the Sepiks and on to the border because I saw those valleys. We can do it. There's a big potential there but we start where we can start first.

Mr Acting Speaker, I want to propose that we construct a railway from the city of Lae all the way to Ramu. Railway is good because it can carry tonnes of goods. Those tonnes that the trucks cannot carry, the trains will do it in the carriages. They can carry heavy cargoes and it is cheaper. I recommend railway not on the land but maybe we could build a railway on the posts because the distance between Lae and Ramu is sitting on water and I don't want to have an experience like the Indians, where they were involved in a very serious train crash that killed 255 people recently. I don't want to experience those kind of accidents so consider railway on the post. The engineers will get it done for you. Like the Minister for Higher Education Research Science and Technology, he is an engineer so he can help you design the railway.

I consider railway but we can consider build-operate-transfer where we can sign an agreement and whoever has the money can come and build the railway and operate for maybe 20 years and handover the infrastructure to us because we desperately need that kind of infrastructure.

22/02

Secondly, I want to recommend the Honourable Works Minister, should consider building tunnels too. There're some places that we can build tunnels like for instance I can give you an example; Wara Kumalu is giving a big headache to every Member from Morobe in this Parliament. We can't build the bridge across because the strength of the nature and toughness beats us all. All the engineering technology cannot match it.

So, I will recommend that you put the tunnel from Labu all the way to Bunga where the Member for Bulolo comes from. Build the tunnel there and then take it on from there to Bayun by tunnel so, we will avoid Wara Kumalu and some other places like that. We can consider building tunnels and then also consider cable car.

Why not, we got plenty of hydro powers going to generate it, a couple of them are in existence now. But we can generate more hydro power to run the cable car so that we don't disturb the forest, trees, birds and insects. We don't have to worry about the land-slide and all of those things. We just go and say hello to the nature and then get your destination in the air and they are down there.

So, we consider that cable car and waterways up in the Sepik. In the Sepik there's a good place where we can build waterways. We build the road, build by the water and we go by the water upwards. Like we building our roads to certain places, we can build the waterways to certain places. We can do it, it's done in other countries.

So, lets us not confine ourselves to the orthodox means of infrastructures that the Australians, the Germans and the other people who came to this country have told us to do. We cannot stick to the orthodox transport and infrastructure. Let's be creative, we are an independent country and we've been to universities and have so many engineers in mining, civil, and many engineers are also in this Parliament.

Let's use our intellectual faculty to the fullest and make sure that we have the innovative ideas to provide the infrastructure and transport that we need for this country. Districts like Goilala, sorry don't get offended but those places need tunnel and cable cars. We cannot be left behind, I love the slogan 'nobody should be left behind'. And before we reach 2050, we should demonstrate that nobody's going to be left behind. We are going to get the right profit infrastructure there so nobody is left behind.

When the 2050 come, we all rejoice from the top of the mountain or wherever we celebrate that the 2050 mission has been achieved with the appropriate infrastructure and transport system that we put it in by the orthodox way or by innovative and creative way.

Mr Acting Speaker, thank you for giving me the leave. Thank you.

Mr EREMAN TOBAINING Jnr (Kokopo) – Thank you, Acting Speaker for recognizing the people of Kokopo. Also, to join our senior Governor of Morobe to debate on the road through Connect PNG and I thank the hard working Minister.

This second statement, is a sign of a hard-working Minister through the Marape-Rosso Government, you have to be commended for this.

In the statement, it indicates the kilometre of roads and construction of the highways through Connect PNG throughout Papua New Guinea. The Minister has stated that he is not just talking but he has inspected the roads throughout the country and not only selecting some of the regions but it is a fair distribution throughout Papua New Guinea

23/02

We have to commend the Marape-Rosso Government through the Minister for presenting his second statement today. Of course, there are challenges but we need Connect PNG and I would like to thank the Government through the Minister for the New Britain Highway. We have waited for almost 20 years and it has been captured through this budget in Pomio, the South Coast Corridor development all the way to Kerema, we thank you, Minister.

This is something that will connect the lives of the people in our country. We are trying to bring the regions and the provinces closer and connect them. With Connect PNG on the highways, we can connect the Opposition Leader's District Pomio all the way to West New Britain.

I want to also thank him for electing some provinces and I believe that Kokopo is one of them which you are trying to bring a four-lane highway, likewise in Hagen. These are the cities that we have been talking about and how we can build infrastructure and bring people in as the fourth city that hosts the New Guinea Islands. We believe that, yes, maybe there will be other plans that will come in the future, as our Governor of Morobe has mentioned.

Mr Acting Speaker, I would like to see improvement in all the Department of Works in the provinces so that we have to take responsibility for them. The Minister has stated through his statement that under Connect PNG, we cannot expand it down to the districts but we will work together with the districts and the provinces which we are now working with.

I would like to commend the Minister for Works and I believe that we will continue to work together to address some of the issues that we are facing.

I have noticed one thing and that is we are losing most of our good engineers in our country. The Governor of Morobe also mentioned that they are leaving our country and going overseas but we need to bring them back so they can help us. The Department of Work's specifications are not being followed by many contractors. And as a result, we continue to see the deterioration of roads because there is a failure or maybe no proper supervision through the Department of Works in the provinces.

The scope and Bill of Quantities (BOQ) that are put into the contracts again need to be addressed through the Department of Works. We have to come up with our specific costings of roads rather than outside contractors coming in and overcharging us for the roads that we are supposed to be building.

So, Mr Acting Speaker, I support this and as the Chairman, we will be going throughout the country and scrutinizing the companies through the engineers so that we can come up and help the Prime Minister to provide a report to be presented to the Parliament.

Mr Acting Speaker, I commend this statement and am thankful for some of the bridges that we have received. On behalf of Pomio, we are thankful for the bailey bridges which will enable us to drive through Kokopo all the way to West New Britain. I am sure it is also happening in other provinces in Papua New Guinea, with that I support the statement.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

24/02

Sitting suspended from 12 noon to 2 p.m.

25/02

Sir PUKA TEMU (Abau) – I commend the Minister and the National Government for this very important program.

Mr Acting Speaker, I have always believed that roads are important and I know that our people also believed that. I want to congratulate the Minister and his team and share with the House a very simple story.

Mr Acting Speaker, when I won the 2002 Elections in Abau, for the first time that I stood, I was visited in the village by my cousin sister who was 20 years older than me. She came to my house and I thought she was going to ask me for money but she said, thank you for winning, now

• fix the roads. That was all she said and she walked away. From then on, my belief in roads belief has never disappeared.

So when the Minister presented the status of our Government's key policy platforms which is the Connect PNG, it brought me a great satisfaction and reminded me of my cousin sister's dream that would come into reality. I thought, if someone as uneducated as she was, can ask me to fix the road, then I think she was one of the smartest person that I have ever met. So today, with the wonderful report that our government is leading in the Connect PNG policy, it is great news.

Mr Acting Speaker, one word that I really wanted the Minister to mention in his statement which I thought would have really summarised the entire intention of our government led by our Prime Minister, that when you look at the 2020 to 2040 Connect PNG Programme, which is 20 years of investment totalling to K40 billion. That is K2 billion every year. No government has ever done that and the word that has been missing from the Minister's statement in my view is, this is truly an economic stimulus package for our government.

When investments such as road construction happens, you and I can already see the enormous stimulus that has already generated in the last two years and that will generate until 2040, 10 years before we reach 2050.

Mr Acting Speaker, I want the Minister to always include economic stimulus in this package because it does have positive impacts in every sector of our community, particularly and in my own belief as I have always say, 'no road – no agriculture in this country'. My cousin asked me to fix the road so that she would come and sell her bananas for her grandchildren's school fees. That was all she wanted. If there were no roads, her dream would just be a dream.

And so, when the Prime Minister announced the Connect PNG Programme, I was in Cabinet when this decision was made before I moved to the Opposition. And when the then-Minister for Works launched this program at Laguna Hotel, I was the only Opposition Member that attended because I believed passionately that this program would bring and stimulate the entire economy, it would give hope to our little people, like my cousin back in 2002.

She has land that she can grow her banana and taro to come and sell at Kupiano or Port Moresby if Magi Highway is fixed because she knows the government will not help her. She sells her banana for K50 and K60. If she is selling 200 bananas, then she will make K4,000.

26/02

Easy money, you don't have to do a big coffee farm or all these things that we are talking about. My cousin knows how to plant banana. My people built their villages from banana gardens, built their houses, from selling banana gardens but through roads.

The reason why I stood in 2002 was because the Magi highway was bad. There were shrubs growing in the middle of Magi highway. Now it takes us four hours to drive.

Before when I stood in 2002, 8 to 13 hours, we were pulling and carrying PMVs. My older brother said, 'you know, the Japanese made PMVs to carry people but we are now carrying PMVs', that's what he said. That's how bad the roads were. And so, I have always believed in covering the country with road network.

I want to raise a couple of issues in my debate, Mr Acting Speaker, because I started the proposal to introduce economic stimulus in this multibillion, close to K2 billion investment in road infrastructure in this country. The Prime Minister has made some pronouncements of creating an X number of millionaires in this country.

In this sector alone, K2 billion every year, Prime Minister, through the Acting Speaker, if we fairly distribute the contracts to each of the regions, so that in Abau; for example, on my side of the highway, if my Abau contractors were recognised, they would pick up that money rather than the same contractor given who is already engaged on building a road in another part of the country, coming and building the road on my part of Abau. Then only one person will become a millionaire in this economic stimulus package which I called a great opportunity.

Mr Acting Speaker, with this investment, by law 5.6 per cent of the budget must be invested in road infrastructure. This same attitude and same culture and commitment must go to us nominating a percentage of the budget in education, in health, and in law and order so that we secure these commitments. And when the government changes, they must not just do the budget according to their politics. No, it must be according to law. We must be a law-oriented society so when the Minister for Works brought this submission to Cabinet to have a legislation committed to roads, this motivated me.

I thank the Minister; he is a true hard worker. He has walked through every part of the country. But you haven't been to Magi highway yet. You owe me that. Tomorrow or next year, we will go. But you've been around everywhere and we admire that. Less talk and more action. And so, I congratulate you and also your hardworking Secretary. He's not on the Floor but behind a performing minister is a hard working a secretary to ensure work flows. We only talk but the Secretary and the team do the job. So, Secretary David Wereh, thank you very much for supporting your Minister. Mr Wereh is a very hardworking and long serving Secretary and so keep on doing a good job. Road building is very important.

But let's according to our *Constitution* and preamble, let's equitably distribute this economic stimulus package when awarding road contracts so that those who want to invest in construction of roads can now go to the bank and say I'm a Papua New Guinean, I want K200 million, I'm gong

to build a road. I have a two-year contract to fix that part of the Magi highway – its guaranteed. You have a Papua New Guinean building roads, lets remove all outsiders. As they say, Take back PNG. That's the type of thing I'm looking at in this economic stimulus package, and I'm debating for.

So, I look forward to this. For me in Abau, right now, as I have said, the floods have destroyed many parts of the highway but I want to thank the minister and his team. The two very bad culverts that were broken down by the floods have already been fixed, thank you very much.

The contractors on the road were advised by the Secretary and since they were already on the road, they did the bypass and the highway is now trafficable. PMVS are coming in and out so that's the way the government responded. I've always been a strong supporter of not the so-called Department of Works, I've gone beyond that myself.

27/02

I don't want the government to go back to engaging the Department of Works to carry out construction of roads.

Some Members of Parliament have bought bulldozers and backhoes for their districts but I decided not to. In my effort, I have created two millionaires in Abau just by giving them contracts to build roads because I don't think that public servants are good at handling these things.

I think the private sectors can do it better because they are committed to fix the backhoe when it's not working, whereas public servants will park it aside and if funds are not allocated then it stays for a longer period without repair and eventually wastes away.

Therefore, the private sector must be fully involved in this multi-billion -kina Connect PNG Programme in fixing our roads and highways in our country. This is one area that I would want Papua New Guinea road builders to start coming up, to apply for K200-300 million road contracts. If the foreigners are awarded the contract's they bank the funds elsewhere. Many foreign contractors are aware of this technique, they read it clearly so they apply for the contracts.

But, how about helping our own potential road construction companies with only one backhoe and bulldozer? Why can't we award contracts to them so they buy more backhoes and bulldozers. And that will enable them to apply for K30-100 million and that can create a lot of jobs for our children who are not able to find jobs after completing university.

That's the argument and this is definitely an economic stimulus package being introduced by our government and so it's an exciting time. My second point, while we are committed to building roads and equitably distributing the contractors in the regions, we must not forget other public infrastructures that will go hand in hand with the road like power and water.

Let's plan for these two as well so when the roads are constructed then the electricity lines are connected at the same time. For instances, Abau has been without power since Independence. The power lines are connected as far as Kwikila Station and it's only 100 kilometres away. Its flat land but we haven't received power as yet.

The highway is already there and, in every highway other public infrastructures like power, internet and water must be connected as well. All these services must flow smoothy. What's going to happen when we connect Abau to Milne Bay? All my people who normally travel by boat will now travel by road and too they will build businesses on the road.

But they need power, water and internet access so multisectoral planning must take place. Once power lines are connected then internet lines can be hooked up as well. So, we need to harness these opportunities.

I congratulate the Minister for a job well done, so please continue. Mr Prime Minister, continue your commitments because this is your government's announcement. It's a huge program, connecting this country is very important.

I can recall what my cousin's dream 25 years ago was and if she was still alive, she would be dancing in my small village called Kapari because for the first time since my fifth term in Parliament now under this Government the Magi Highway has received the biggest amount of funding, thank you Mr Prime Minister.

For the first time after 20 years, normally every year, I would fight for K10 million and it couldn't cover the Magi Highway well.

But now the sealing has ended near a small bridge called Imila and 55 kilometres of a two-way lane is going to be constructed to Moreguina.

28/02

That's a very big achievement and my people in Abau will for the first time ride on sealed road. Another lot of Papua New Guineans will enjoy modern infrastructure in road.

I have a humble request before my time is up, to make to the Honourable Minister for Works and Highways. The current sealing program begins at Imila to Kupiano turn-off and all the way to Moreguina at the Kupiano Town where the Prime Minister officiated at the opening of a new hospital. I think, I will invite the Minister for Health to come as it is one of the best district hospitals in the country so that you can have a look at it. It's located in Kupiano town but the road sealing

is going to go the other way and the two kilometres coming to Kupiano town will be missed. I think thats not fair.

When somebody is designing a sealed road, we must also connect little towns, especially when Kupiano Town is only two kilometres away from where the sealing diverts towards east to Moreguina and coming west two kilometres from Kupiano town. I am demanding today, Mr Acting Speaker, and humbly requesting the Minister for Works and Highways to please include the K2 million extensions for Kupiano while all the equipment and building materials are there. What is two kilometres when one kilometre is K2 million and two kilometres, is K4 million.

Mr Minister, through you, Mr Acting Speaker, it costs K4 million just to connect the biggest town in Abau district, my headquarter and then the biggest business economic town in Abau is Moreguina town, where the road sealing ends. The Moreguina town is only two kilometres away and that's going to be missing out. When all the equipment is there and the government says no, we won't go to the town. It's not the way we government should think. We should think comprehensively and therefore, if my two service centres are connected by sealed road, just imagine the amount of business movement in that little economy and the growth of the economy.

But, once again, congratulations Minister, keep on doing the good job. Thank you, Prime Minister for the commitment. The example on this Connect PNG Programme and the 5.6 per cent of the budget is dedicated to roads.

Once upon a time, I think 15 years ago, I remember the Works Secretary, crying with his Minister in Cabinet, we need K1 billion to maintain the houses but we were only allocated K200-300 million. That was not enough so all the roads were falling apart as the Minister has said.

Now, the story has changed. I agree with you Minister, roads build our economy, no roads, no agriculture, no economy. Roads are very important; it is like a road leading to Heaven.

As my cousin said, fix my road so I can sell my banana to buy school fees for my grandchildren and I will be the happiest women on Earth. God bless all of you, God bless our Connect PNG Program.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr SAM BASIL Jnr (Bulolo) – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I just want to say thank you and commend the good Minister for Works and Highways for the presentation of the annual report for 2022.

I want to also stress a little bit on what my Governor of Morobe has said. I thought that he will not mention anything on Kumalu River but he has mentioned almost 50 per cent of the subject already so I speak on the remaining 50 per cent.

We have been talking about upgrading the Wau-Bulolo Highway which is good but Kumalu River awaits us, it will be our deterrence. This particular river has washed away two to three bridges already. Maybe, some metres beneath the river lies remnants of houses, schools and service station. I can remember these structures, back in my childhood days, we used to play around that area. They are now all under that river. This road is shared by the three districts; Bulolo, Wau-Waria and Menyamya so the two district MPs will agree with me to build a flyover. The flyover will not be built on the Kumalu River but it must be built away from Kumalu River.

29/02

We respect the nature and we want to keep it on the left. When you stand at Zenag and look towards Bulolo, on your left you will see beautiful mountains on that side. We need a fly over bridge connecting Zenag to the other side on the left so you keep Kumalu on your right. We can travel on the other side of the mountain and we can divert back to the main road or otherwise continue to Bayun and then come out and go to Bulolo, Menyamya, and Wau-Waria.

So, this is just a small suggestion that we are offering because we can't do it on our own, we need the Works Department and the Government to step in and help us through feasibilities studies and probably get the funding in and we can start the work. You can build any type of bridge or underground tunnel but we can't fight with nature. We must build on the other side away from the disaster zone.

I don't have much to say, except to say you have done a good job. You have done a lot of work. Just a few days back you were in Morobe Province inspecting our roads and I thank you for that.

Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker for giving me the opportunity.

Dr LINO TOM (Wabag – Minister for Health) – Mr Acting Speaker, let me take this opportunity to also congratulate our hard-working Works Minister for the statement he presented this morning.

If you look at our *Constitution*, I think in the preamble, taking the cue from our senior leader from Abau, I think it states that resources must be distributed equitably. And if you look at it, I think to provide a fair platform on which services can be distributed equitably, I think road access provides that fair platform.

It's quite difficult for us to give services to people who are landlocked, people who are living in the outlying highlands, it's quite difficult without proper form of communication and proper

access. So, if you look at it access actually provides that fair platform where every other citizens of this country can have access to government services.

Rightly so, the Medium-Term Development Plan III states that roads are the enabling infrastructures. Roads enable government services to reach everyone so on behalf of myself, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Marape-Rosso Government for actually making Connect PNG one of its flagship policy programs.

Under that program, I think all the districts have been given equitable amount of resources to actually realize their dreams in building access for their people. So, in Wabag we have also received our share of resources from the government and we have actually built certain roads to some of the landlocked areas and one of such area is a sub district called Maramuni which is actually between East Sepik Province and Enga. It's actually located in the landlocked area, it's quite difficult to access that area.

When I look at the statistics, before there was any form of road connection, the clinic that operated out of the station in Maramuni had an attendance rate of 3,000 patients in a year. As soon as the road reached Maramuni station, in a year, the attendance rate went up to 19,000. So, you can see road access is a very important enabler, and provides access to government services.

Without roads we can't provide good social services like health and education so roads form a very important part of any government's endeavor to provide services for its people.

Also, if you look at economic services, every other country on planet earth made their supply chain very cheap in terms of shipping expenses and freighting expenses. This country has one of the highest costs in terms of supply chain, not only supply chain but also in terms of other basic utilities like power and water.

If we are to compete within our region, where you know it's a very hotspot area where a lot of countries are actually growing. And if we are to compete in that area, we have to provide all those services and make the cost of doing business in our country cheap. That means, we have to build good roads so that the cost of freighting must come down. We must have cheap water, power, so that we can compete with our neighboring countries. Otherwise the dream of doing downstream processing, the dream of having our own factories will only be a dream.

So, on behalf of myself, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the good Minister for Works and of course thank our good Prime Minister for his foresight because without good roads we won't be heading anywhere. We must have good infrastructure and when having good infrastructure in place, it will be easier for our businesses to compete and do business.

Also, in saying that, I would also reiterate some of the points raised by our leader from Abau.

30/02

I think we need to distribute the contracts. If you start giving contracts to only a few companies, that is when they start to trap wealth because their basic expenses are only so much, and after they have met that expense the rest of the money is actually trapped and more often they get moved overseas. But, if you start spreading contracts to a lot of people, they turn to start spending in our economy and it starts to create that cash flow and our businesses will thrive, and our economy will work.

So, that is one issue I would like to raise regarding the Connect PNG. It is a good program but we must start looking at our own local contractors, we must start building up their capacity. In saying that, it also comes back to us Papua New Guineans who own companies to do honest jobs, there are a lot of contractors who get money and walk off with the money. There is a lot of them.

We have to be honest with ourselves. Before we reach out for help, we have to help ourselves by being honest with ourselves and give the best we can to our country. We have no other country than the country that we live in right now.

Also, in terms of the Connect PNG, if you look at the map, all the roads seem to be heading down south but all the economies are happening in the northern hemisphere, in the Asian area. I do not see the Northern-Enga corridor. I have always been talking about the Enga-Sepik Highway but I do not see it being reflected here so now, I am a bit discouraged. All the shipping ports are coming from that region and we need to put that as a priority and connect the northern corridor. That is one grievance that I have to raise today and bring before the Minister for Works.

But, in saying that, I am really happy and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Works. I think when I started building my own roads, there is a different kinds of thinking in the Parliament; some think that we should give contracts out to our local contractors which is good if you have a lot of money in the district, you can do that. But, some of us who do not have a lot of money, we think the cheapest way is to do it ourselves. We buy our own machines and meet the overhead costs and you can do so many roads with the little resource that you get in a fiscal year.

So, in using that arrangement in Wabag, we have built almost about 13 roads. By purchasing our own machines, we were able to construct those roads. They are pilot tracks, they are not properly surveyed and designed roads but those things will come in time when we go further to develop and upgrade our roads.

But, I think roads are an important component of any development, without access we cannot bring any services to our people. Teachers in rural areas refuse to go and teach in the rural areas. Just like any other parent, they want their children to have access to government services. If they

can't have access, why will they go to rural areas to teach? The same for health workers, they do not want to go to rural areas to work when there is no road.

I think Connect PNG is a flagship program that the Marape-Rosso Government has brought and it has actually transformed the lives of ordinary Papua New Guineans who deserve the service as much as the rest of us who live in urban areas. With the Connect PNG Programme, the rural and isolated areas are being connected and a lot of people are having access to basic government services.

Let me again congratulate the Marape-Rosso Government and the Minister for Works for the hard work he has put in. And also the Secretary for Works is one that is always being criticized and ridiculed but it is a difficult job to do and I think he has done well so far. In saying that, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him and all his hard-working team from the Department.

Thank you.

31/02

Ms RUFINA PETER (Central) – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker for giving me the opportunity to speak. I would like to thank the previous members of Parliament in commending the Marape-Rosso Government for giving a significant amount of money towards the Connect PNG Programmne. I want to also thank the Minister and recognize the hard work that he has put in to Connect PNG and roads in general.

I would like to raise two points of concern. The first one is maintaining the existing national highway. In the case of Central Province, there are roads and bridges that need to be maintained.

The second thing that I want to point out is that provincial roads that are going to become national roads, because they are in the Connect PNG program needs to be looked at also. For example, my brother Governor of Morobe was talking about the Goilala road that connects to Wau-Waria and to Lae. So if the Mona Highway is in the Connect PNG Programme, I would like to see that road being upgraded from a provincial road to the status of a national highway. So in terms of how you sequence your interventions in improving the roads that is a logical and prudent way to look at the investment into the Connect PNG roads.

So two points here, maintaining the existing national highway that fall into the Connect PNG Programme and upgrading the provincial roads that are going to be in the Connect PNG road into national condition and status before we connect the missing links.

In connecting the missing links, what I've heard so far is the economic emphasis on the economic stimulus and advantage in terms of economic impact. But I want to also raise the

importance of the social impact these roads will have on communities where these roads will go through.

So in November last year, I met with the Minister for Works and his Secretary and I asked if there was a social impact assessment study done for road Trans-Island Highway to Port Moresby. I was told that ADB was doing the study and I'm not sure if that has actually been done and is completed and whether the report is available.

My brother Minister for Health just said that we are looking from North to South, and the emphasis is coming down south. Well as the Governor of Central Province, I do have concerns as well. From the point of view that if this road is connected, or when its connected the social impact on the Southern region and especially Central is going to be significant. And within Central Province we're not ready for the negative social impact. This leads me to emphasizing the points about making sure that the national highways and provincial roads and even the smaller roads into the hinter lands where there is significant economic potential that we haven't touched yet because we don't have the logic to do that.

Once they sort that out the social impact of connecting these roads will be beneficial for everyone. But at this point in time, as I look at what's happening, I think the economic impact is significantly favourable but the social impact on the people of Central Province and the Southern Region as a whole, is something that is of concern too as Governor of Central Province.

So I just wanted to bring that down in your records and I hope that it will be taken seriously in continuing of Connect PNG Programme. Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Central Province.

32/02

Mr JOHN ROSSO (Lae – Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Lands and Physical Planning and Urbanization) – Esteemed members of this House, I'd like to also join in this debate and commend our good and hard-working Minister for Works and Highways, on his very informative statement to Parliament. I would like to also say thank you to all esteemed members of Parliament, including our Cabinet members for this very important project, lifeline and connectivity that we call Connect PNG.

I felt very happy listening to our good Member for Abau, Sir Puka Temu. He said and I quote 'it is not just the connectivity; it is also an economic stimulus package for the country.'

Naysayers say, what are you guys doing to grow the economy? Connect PNG is a prime example of what we have done to connect PNG and stimulate the economy in this country. By connecting PNG, we have just grown a hundred PNG contractors from all works of life. We have

connected our peoples' economic lifelines, health centres, roads and districts to our urban centres. We have also increased better infrastructure for our urban centres.

But just listening to Sir Puka Temu talking about it and his demands that more national contractors be engaged, and I agree. That is what this Government has done. All of us sitting in this Parliament have done just that. We have created opportunities for local businessmen.

Every year, over K1.5 billion goes straight to them. When BSP declares dividends and profits during hard times like Covid-19. They declared over a billion in profit. Where did they get the money from? That is the profit from the Papua New Guinean companies that goes back to BSP. That is why they declared huge profits in the last two years during really hard times like Covid-19.

So when people talk about stimulus packages, this is one of the best prime examples, connecting PNG and connecting and stimulating our economy. But more so, our Papua New Guinean contractors. And quoting again from the good Member for Wabag and the Minister for Health, that these contractors too must stand up and be professional and grow to meet the expectations and standards. It is not easy building roads. I say this with experience. I used to build roads before in my private time and life.

Mr Acting Speaker, when I was a contractor, I had to sack 200 Papua New Guineans because my company, a local contractor, was not given any contract by the government at that time. I cried when I sacked 200 of my staffs because they gave all the contracts to foreign companies.

Today, 90 per cent of all these contracts are going out to hard-working Papua New Guineans who are keeping the money in the country and spinning it in our economy and connecting all our villages. When I sit in Cabinet and see Papua New Guinean companies coming and getting the contracts, I feel very happy.

But while I am happy, I just want to inform them that they must work and meet the expectations and deliver good quality contracts. This in an opportunity for them to grow. Do not just get the money without delivering quality work. We must all hold them accountable.

Not only through the national works but in every district, our government has given a lot of district road contracts to every single district in Papua New Guinea to connect our districts. And that goes straight to our DSIPs and DDAs to manage it. The onus is on us all as members of Parliament to ensure that we use these infrastructure grants so that we connect all the little hinterlands inside our beautiful country.

Mr Acting Speaker, and when we say connectivity, it is not just about roads but also about communication, power, wharves, bridges and airports. We see airports, airstrips and wharves being rolled out. Connect PNG is working. We need to do this for the next 10 years so that we can be

able to truly connect every hinterland in Papua New Guinea, and we have done that by giving 5.6 per cent of our annual budget by law to the Connect PNG Programme. This is a very huge sum of money. Some of the economic lifelines and contractors have stepped up.

33/02

Look at the 9-mile to 14-mile road in Port Moresby. It was done by a Papua New Guinean company and is nearly completed now and in very good quality too.

This Government, Mr Acting Speaker, the people in this room, we are pro nationalists, we are pro-Papua New Guinean companies. We want more for our country, we want more in our equities, in all our mines, and all our extractive industries, but at the same time, while being pronationalists, we respect others also who work in our country and we do it within the confines of our law.

Mr Acting Speaker, I'm very happy to stand here and say thank you for the support of every single one of you in this room, together we can, together we'll make this a much better country for our people.

We have a lot of issues to be fixed, not only in roads, in health centres, in police stations, in law and order but you can see that we have now together appropriated sufficient funding in our law-and-order sector moving forward. We have now appropriated funding to ensure the hospitals are built and more hospitals will be built to help the people, like in Central Province, to help our people in Wabag, to help our people in East Sepik, to help our people in Lae, working conductively, working with our development partners and working with each other and making certain our budget, our money is put and used to the best of its ability, to the best of its use.

Let's work together to develop our country. With this, I would like to commend Parliament and again say thank you to the Minster and the hardworking staff behind him, the Secretary and all his Works staff. With this, thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

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

Motion – That the Parliament take note of the paper – agreed to.

Paper noted.

DEPARTMENT OF PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL LEVEL GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT 2021, 2022 – PAPER – PAPER NOTED

Mr SOROI EOE (Kikori-Minister for Provincial &Local Level Government Affairs) – Pursuant to statute, I present the following report;

Department of Provincial And Local Level Government Affairs 2017 Annual Report

I ask leave of Parliament to make a statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Mr Acting Speaker, since this is my first ministerial statement for this Government, let me from the outset thank the Marape-Rosso Government for the privilege of being appointed Minister to head this very important ministry.

Furthermore, I also wish to thank my people of Kikori for giving me another term to represent them as their Member in Parliament. Let me also thank my predecessors, the Honourable Pilai Niningi, Honourable Wesley Nukundj and the late Honourable Kevin Isifu for their hard work from which I am able to present this report today.

My department is a small organisation with a small budget but it is mandated with huge responsibilities. The former government and this Government under the leadership of current Prime Minister, were formed under the Covid-19 pandemic and tough economic climate which resulted in major budget cuts and cost-saving measures being put in place. This didn't deter my ministry and department from performing our assigned functions and responsibilities diligently.

34/02

Despite the financial constraints and other contributing factors, the Department managed to progress 13 high-profile national government policy directives and initiatives, which I am pleased to report on and provide progressive updates to this Parliament.

(1) Implementation of the National Government Decentralization Policy

Mr Acting Speaker, the first priority program is on the implementation of the National Government Decentralization Policy. By way of introduction, the proposed Bill on the Organic

Law on Decentralization has now been shelved and the department has been instructed by the National Executive Council (NEC) to administratively transfer powers to the provincial governments.

What I am reporting is what has happened in 2020 and 2021. This matter has been again discussed in the last few days in the Governor's Conference. So, I will be bringing to this Parliament in August an update of what I am now talking about.

That is, we will follow the National Constitution and the Organic Law on Provincial Governments & Local Level Governments (OLPGLLG) requirements and work within these legislation's parameters to transfer substantial powers to the provincial governments.

The previous arrangement of gradate decentralization and service delivery partnership agreements as a conduit to transfer powers is now being reviewed and some components will be integrated into the current administrative arrangements.

The department is now developing the legislative process requirements on decentralisation' documents. This will encompass establishing processes and procedures to be followed when transferring powers to the provinces.

Initial provinces of Enga, New Ireland and East New Britain will begin the assessment and process of transfer of requested powers or functions. This will be followed by Morobe, West New Britain and Central provinces.

The Department is now putting together this document to ensure power transfer is within the spirit and intent of the constitutional requirements.

(2) National Service Delivery Framework

Mr Acting Speaker, the second priority program is the national service delivery framework (NSDF) which my Department (DPLGA) and Department of National Planning & Monitoring (DNPM) are jointly developing.

Initial work on the national service delivery framework commenced in 2020 with the final report ready for publication soon. The intent of this framework is two-fold; firstly, to improve service delivery in all sectors; and secondly, to promote government accountability and evidence-based service delivery planning, budgeting and decision making.

The NSDF policy focuses on 'niupela lukluk bilong service delivery in PNG. The NSDF simply echoes that effective and efficient government services equates to improved quality of life for Papua New Guineans and through the NSDF, it will link the level of government and level of services through the concept called 'point of service delivery'.

The focus of this approach is to improve frontline service at certain places and certain points and hopefully address the grim reality that efforts from both the public and private sectors into

improving the livelihood of citizens is not achieving an acceptable level of services that have been provided.

The national service delivery framework aligns to the National Government's focus and polices and provides the platform for all stakeholders including, the government as well as private sector, churches, non-government organisations and development partners (donors) as well as community initiatives to collaboratively work together in sharing knowledge and resources to improve quality of life for the people.

Mr Acting Speaker, the national service delivery framework is about demarcation of functions between levels of government, ensuring clarity in roles and responsibilities and assigning funds. Put simply, it is about working together. It also provides the framework for monitoring and evaluation of sanctioned government programs including other donor-driven initiatives.

Lots of funds have been spent over the years and very little monitoring is being done to ascertain how effective and beneficial these programs are to the communities. There are also reporting gaps. The national service delivery framework will ensure that there is alignment and centralised collection of data for all of us to use in future planning and decision making process.

35/02

Throughout the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2021, Department of Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs (DPLGA) and Department of National Planning and Monitoring (DNPM) held a number of meetings and regional consultative workshops aimed at linking the NSDF to the Annual Provincial Performance Reporting as per Section 119 of the Organic Law on Provincial Governments & Local-Level Governments (OLPGLLG). Simultaneously, we have also undertaken a review of the performance indicators in the current Section 119 reporting template so it can be used as a benchmark for measuring performance.

(3) Review of Inter-Government Financing Arrangement

Mr Acting Speaker, the third priority program is the review of the Inter-Government Financing Arrangement. The Department has solicited support from other relevant agencies such as Department of Treasury and the National Economic Fiscal Commission (NEFC) to agree and undergo this review to complement the gradate decentralization process.

Since 2021, the department has continued to work in close consultation with the National Economic Fiscal Commission (NEFC), a stakeholder in PLLSMA through the subcommittee on Inter-Government Financing.

To progress review on the Inter-Government Financing Arrangement (RIGFA), the NEFC requested for my Department to undertake a review of the current service delivery determinations.

The function determination is a statutory demarcation of service delivery functions and responsibilities between provincial governments and local level governments and assigned or agreed functions and responsibilities for district development authorities and city authorities.

Mr Acting Speaker, the review is part of the reforms that the National Government has agreed to take on as it will influence the calculation of grants to the provinces and more so, with the establishment of district development authorities and city authorities, the review of functions will spell out clearly these demarcations.

It was further discussed that the NEFC cannot start work on this arrangement unless DPLGA reviews the functions determination stating now that district development authorities and city authorities are on board, we need to spell out clearly the demarcations on where the functions stop and what funding goes there.

(4) District Town Improvement Program

Mr Acting Speaker, the fourth priority program is to improve district towns as the seat of authority to manage and effectively deliver social and economic services to our people. This program is implemented under the District Town Improvement Program (DTIP). The main objective of this program is to grow district economies by directly funding capital investment to trigger cash generation and district economic growth.

Since the inception of this program in 2019, a total of K23.5 million was directly invested in the district town infrastructure development. This money funded 18 core district town infrastructures including district administration, district markets, district finance office, district hospital, staff housing, water supply and district town road construction and maintenance. This is an ongoing program for the department.

(5) Ward Record Book Rollout

Mr Acting Speaker, the fifth priority program is to operationalise *Section 57* of the *Local Level Governments Administration Act 1997* which refers to Village Book. It is now referred to as Ward Record Book.

36/02

This is the most important of the four activities I have reported earlier on because this program will provide critical answers to some of the questions we have been asking. Are all people accessing social and economic services? How many of our people are yet to receive these services? Have the monies we budgeted and approved annually in this Parliament reached the people? How many people are living in the villages? And how many have migrated out? How many have died and how many more babies are born in each ward annually?

The content of the Ward Record Book includes information on social, economic, population, infrastructure, commerce, agriculture, fisheries, communication, cultures, transport, law and order and church information. When fully implemented the Ward Record Book will be one of the powerful management tools, to manage service delivery in our country. The outcomes derived from the data annually, will confirm the decisions of national and provincial politicians, heads of government departments, provincial administrators, district administrators and council managers that have led their organizations in the provision of specific services delivery task.

In 2020, the Ward Record Book was launched, and rolled out to six provinces namely; Eastern Highlands, Enga, Western Highlands, New Ireland, East New Britain and Central provinces. The rollout of Ward Record Book is now progressing.

(6) City Authority

Mr Acting Speaker, the sixth priority program was to sort out implementation issues of Lae, Mt Hagen and Kokopo City Authorities. I will briefly provide updates on the implementation and operationalization of the City Authority Acts.

Leading up to the implementation of the acts, there were confusions on the roles of city authorities and the urban local level governments. I would like to thank the Inter Departmental Agency Team that brokered peace between the two entities. I also take this time to thank the Member for Lae Open who is now Deputy Prime Minister and of course, Member for Hagen Open and Member for Kokopo Open for their support in resolving the legal issues.

Mr Acting Speaker, specific amendments were made which now allows the city authorities to operate as a statutory organization to raise revenues and at the same time provide municipal services. The amendment bills were read in this Parliament and subsequently got approved which made the Open Members as the Chairman of their respective city authorities. The city authorities board members swearing in and the senior managers' employment are ongoing and progressing well.

(7) Implementation of DDA

Mr Acting Speaker, the seventh priority program was on the implementation of the DDA Act 2014. By way of introduction, the District Development Authority Act came into effect as of January 2015.

Please note that six of the districts in the National Capital District and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville are not covered under this act, thus the act covers only 90 districts including the seven new districts coming onboard this year which means those new districts are now being implemented and thus we have new Members on the Floor of Parliament.

To date, the department has commenced work into the development of the Policy Framework on DDA Regulation with consultations made with various stakeholders since August and September of that year 2020. An Information Paper, Draft Regulation and DDA Reporting Template have been completed pending further hands-on practical feedback from the DDAs before it is finalized for the Minister to take it through NEC and to Parliament.

Another Contributing factor to work being stalled in finalizing the regulation was because of recent amendments which, the department wasn't aware of concerning sections 2, 24, 25, 26 and 27 of the DDA Act.

Additionally, the department has also continued its partnership with PILAG under an existing Memorandum of Understanding for Short-terms Competency Courses and Trainings targeting DPLGA, Provincial and District officials. The MOU will be implemented over a period of four years from 2021 to 2024. Under the partnership arrangement, DPLGA is looking at the program design while PILAG is focusing on the program development and delivery.

37/02

The DDA training package covers 12 Modules which cover areas such as town, urban, physical planning, development economics, business management, corporate governance; et cetera.

It is our firm belief that we have to first build the capacities of our staff and that of the provinces and districts before we could enforce compliance under the regulation and monitor the performance of the districts.

(8) Payment of ward councilors' monthly allowances and delivery of councilors' badges and uniforms.

Mr Acting Speaker, the eighth priority program is on the Payment of Ward Councilor's Monthly Allowances and Councilor's Badges. There are 331 local-level governments, with 6, 375 elected councilors who represent their wards in the local level government assemblies.

They are in fact 6,375 politicians that ensure that there is order, peace, and harmony in the wards. They unite villages and communities. They are our honorable leaders who always strive for the best for our communities. They need to be rewarded for their unselfish and servant leadership which they provided for our people annually.

Mr Acting Speaker, I am happy to inform this Parliament that the Department in 2020, paid out K26.63 million to 5,354 ward members as their monthly allowances. A total of 1,024 ward members are yet to be paid, as I said this is two years ago, and this situation has changed. Let me also add that most of the outstanding allowances have been paid and all the ward members are put

on salary every month. A total of 1, 024 ward members are yet to be paid because of bank account issues, at that time. All allowances are deposited through BSP Kundu Pay System and kept in custody with the banks and once all bank account issues are sorted out by members, the allowances are backdated and paid.

Mr Acting Speaker, further, in recognition of the services of the ward members in our communities, the Department purchased 6,500 badges and other accessories. The badges and uniforms as they were known in the past were worn by the LLG members (councilors) as a symbol of authority.

The official launching of the LLG Ward Councilors badges and uniforms was done by the then Minister for InterGovernment Relations, Honourable Pila Niningi on the 17 December, 2021 at Walum Station, Imbongu District of Southern Highlands Province and was attended by 157 ward members. This occasion is a milestone as it restored pride, respect, and prominence to ward members as duly elected leaders of the third-tier Government.

(9) Implementation Of Rural Service Delivery Program

Mr Acting Speaker, the ninth priority program is the Rural Service Delivery Program. This is one of the best-managed development partners' assisted projects. I will now highlight some of the major achievements but first, let me thank the Department of Treasury, Finance, and National Planning & Monitoring for their support since the inception of this project.

Mr Acting Speaker, further, let me on behalf of the Marape-Rosso Government express our sincere gratitude to the World Bank and the Australian Government for facilitating funds made available by International Development Association.

38/02

The Association by way of a credit facility funded US\$23 million and DFAT granted through the World Bank funded US\$4.5 million over the next five years' period. This project has come to an end.

Mr Acting Speaker, I will be meeting with World Bank representatives hopefully by today to secure an additional K110 million to fund this project. By way of background information, this program targets rural and remote local level governments and wards. Projects are decided by the ward members and women participation is given prominence. Projects includes construction of classrooms, teachers' house, school libraries, community health centres, women resource centres, water supply and community halls.

Five (5) provinces are benefiting from this program namely; Central, Western, East New Britain, Simbu and West Sepik provinces. A total of 227 projects were approved in 2020, 53 in

Simbu, 51 in East New Britain, 51 in West Sepik, 51 in Central and 48 in Western Province. This project is progressing well despite some challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic amongst other external factors.

Mr Acting Speaker, this program directly supported the Marape-Basil Government then and now the Marape-Rosso Government's agenda on developing the wards as the basis for national social and economic development.

I believe that when we develop our wards into small village economies, we will develop this nation. The program is giving us the results we want and it supports the National Government agenda on developing the 6,375 wards into small economies in the next 10 years. More so, it helps to improve our sustainable development goals and our overall Human Development Indexes, thus improving basic service delivery to our people in the rural and remote communities.

(9) LLG Leaders Payroll System

Mr Acting Speaker, the tenth priority program is on implementing NEC Decision No.322/2021 on LLG Leaders Payroll System. The department has established a user-friendly customised Councillors Payroll System (CPS) and currently paying the Councillors allowances as and when funding is released by Department of Treasury as I made reference to earlier.

To address the issue of cash flow problem and late release of warrants currently being experienced, the Marape-Basil Government made a decision in 2021 to pay the LLG Leaders through the Public Service Payroll Systems or ALESCO Payroll System. We are currently having on-going discussions with relevant departments (Treasury, Finance, DPM and DNPM) to implement it together with another NEC Decision by Marape-Basil Government to include Councillors from Bougainville (ARoB) in the Government Payroll Systems just like the LLG leaders.

Mr Acting Speaker, the use of the PNG ALESCO Payroll System will avert any unnecessary delays in payment and all LLG Ward Members are expected to be on fortnightly salary soon. Through this initiative, we believe it will greatly boost their performance as members of the third-tier government and also as leaders within their respective communities.

39/02

(11) Development of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Policy for PNG

Mr Acting Speaker, the eleventh priority program was the development of the Internally Displaced Person's (IDP) Policy for PNG. The National Executive Council in 2018 directed the

department to assess the incidences of internal displacements caused by both natural and human-induced disasters and develop a national policy on Internally Displaced Persons.

The current disaster relates to legislations and policies in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and do not fully recognize the plights of displaced people who are found within the borders of PNG. The Government is now trying to asses and identify ways to find durable solutions to cater for the needs of these internally displaced people.

Mr Acting Speaker, as a background, there are three types of disasters that cause people to be displaced in PNG or for that matter in any country in the world.

- (1) Natural disaster that causes people to move.
- (2) Development-induced disaster where development occurs and cause people to be displaced from their place of origin, and,
- (3) Man-made disaster such as tribal fights and sorcery-related issues that leads to displacement.

Since 2019 to date, a technical working team comprising from officers of DPLGA and PM and NEC have undertaken field assessment and evaluation of 17 provinces in the country. The findings from our assessment shows some very disturbing and pressing issues relating to the plights of internally displaced people in the country.

This assessment also revealed very serious policy gaps that needed to be addressed immediately by a way of policy.

There is clearly lack of or non-existence of policies which has hindered standard coordination of humanitarian assistance, evacuation, resettlement, managing, returning and reintegration using our Melanesian cultural norms and values as well as government sectoral planning.

The development of the National Policy on Internally Displaced People in the country is very important in addressing one of the major issues affecting some of the most marginalized and vulnerable group of people in the country that have been neglected over the years.

Mr Acting Speaker, an Inter-Departmental Steering Committee on Internal Displaced People will be established to present draft policy to relevant stakeholders to provide awareness and capture their views and inputs. A ministerial committee will also be established to present the policy to the CACC and National Executive Council for vetting and approval and finally tabled on the Floor of Parliament.

It is therefore imperative that a national policy on Internally Displaced Persons to be formulated to assist and guide the government in addressing issues relating to and affecting the

displaced persons in this country. Mr Acting Speaker, again this matter has been upgraded and this is not the case anymore.

The department is currently in the process of consolidating all data and information gathered to finalize the draft IDP Policy. It is intended to be completed by the end of December 2022. As you can imagine, this paper should have been presented a long time ago.

(12) Manam and Kadavor Resettlement Program

Mr Acting Speaker, the twelfth priority program was on Manam and Kadovar Islanders displaced by the volcanic eruptions and their permanent resettlement programs. Before I continue, by way of background information, I would like to inform this Parliament that the *Disaster Management Act* is now managed by the Department of Defence, whilst my department administers the *Resettlement* and *Restoration Acts* respectively. This is as per the ministerial determinations endorsed by this Parliament recently.

40/02

Firstly, I would like to report on Manam resettlement. The Government established *Manam Resettlement Authority Act in 2018* and became fully operational in 2020 after lengthy 16 years of political interference, in-fighting, misuse of funds allocated for displaced 25,000 people of Manam. Hence, it took too long to settle and find durable solutions for our people. This is one of the worst disaster mismanagement recorded in this country, it must never happen again.

The authority's main function is to find durable and sustainable solutions for permanent resettlement of our people in Bogia and Sumkar districts in Madang province and elsewhere in the country.

Mr Acting Speaker, since passing of Manam Resettlement Act of 2016, a new chairman was appointed, a full board established, an organisational structure approved and an acting CEO was appointed. The funds total in K2million was successfully allocated to the authority to reopen the closed health centre, maintenance of classrooms, purchasing roofing irons and to provide for seedlings for rehabilitation programs.

Under the new management, we have successfully conducted peace and reconciliation ceremonies at Asumba Care Centre, secured office space for authorities in Madang Town and constructed four ward bases at Bogia District Headquarters. Secondly, there is a land investigation and surveying work at Raptuk designated area for permanent resettlement.

Mr Acting Speaker, I will now proceed on to present Kadovo island's resettlement work progress. By way of introduction, the volcanic eruption in 2018 completely destroyed Kadovo island. It displaced 600 people including young children. We will now relocate them to mainland

and people are currently living at Denden care centre in East Sepik. The department established a reporting mechanism for management of funds allocated whilst waiting for the Act to be passed.

A total of K2 million has been released by the National Government for rehabilitation of this program. This too has changed. I will bring in up to date information later. Whilst there is legislation to manage the permanent resettlement of displaced Manam people, the department is managing permanent resettlement for Kadovo people by working with Wewak islands and Turubu rural LLGs and Wewak Development District Authority and the East Sepik Provincial Government.

Let me thank Governor and East Sepik Provincial Government for taking leadership on this very important issue. The department has prepared a draft Bill to establish a Kadovo resettlement authority however, whilst in consultation it has formed the view that displaced population of estimated 600 people can be successfully resettled by the department and the East Sepik provincial government, creating additional administrative body under legislation to resettle 600 displaced persons maybe cause unnecessary financial and administrative difficulties.

It must be noted that resettling Manam Islanders under an authority is necessary due to large group of people which is totalling 25,000 people to be resettled.

(13) Border Development Authority function transferred to Department of Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs

Mr Acting Speaker, the thirteen-priority program was on implementation of NEC decision No. 359/2018 on Border Development Authority function being transferred to Department of Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs.

As you may recall in 2019, this Parliament ceased the operation of *Border Development Authority Act 2008* effectively abolishing the Border Development Authority and recommended the same functions to be transferred to the department.

I'm happy to inform this Parliament that transfer was completed in 2020 under the guidance of former secretary, Mr Dickson Guina. BDA functions were factored into current Department of Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs organisation structure including formal hand over of BDA assets.

41/02

Mr Acting Speaker, in conclusion, in my earlier opening statement, I have alluded to my ministry and the Department of Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs as small in terms of its manpower ceiling and financial resources but shoulders huge responsibilities by managing

22 provinces, 90 districts (excluding 6 districts in National Capital District and Arob) and 331 local level governments, 6,375 wards, 3 city authorities, and 14 special purposes authorities.

The Ministry and the Department remain as the nerve centre that works within the highly decentralised system of governance to support the national government service delivery reform agenda.

Mr Acting Speaker, the performance reports that I have briefly presented to this Parliament demonstrates the commitment and discipline in the use of limited financial resources by my ministry and the Department of Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs.

It is a testament to what we can achieve with limited financial resources. I am pleased to say that we have delivered on all of the major government policy initiatives and directives assigned to my ministry and the Department.

Mr Acting Speaker, I now present the Department of Provincial and Local Level Governments Affairs Annual Performance Reports for 2020 and 2021 to this honourable Parliament for its noting and endorsement.

I thank you Mr Acting Speaker and rest of the Parliament for sitting and listening, God bless.

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

Motion- That the Parliament take note of paper - agreed to.

Paper noted.

42/02

ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by **Dr Lino Tom**) agreed to —

That Parliament do now adjourn.

Parliament adjourned at 3.50 p.m.

