

FIRST DAY

Tuesday 3 October 2023

DRAFT HANSARD

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CORRECTIONS TO DAILY HANSARD

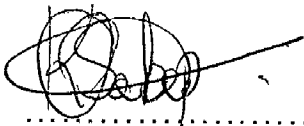
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KENNETH SEBEPMIN

Acting Principal Parliamentary Reporter

FIRST DAY

Tuesday 3 October 2023

The Parliament met at 2 p.m., according to the Terms and Resolutions of 11 August 2023.

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

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

Sitting suspended.

The Deputy Speaker, again took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and invited the Member for Rabaul, Honourable **Dr Allan Marat** to say Prayers;

‘Abba Father, yu stap long Heven, yu sidaun i stap, Earth is your footstool. Mi laik tok tenkyu long yu Papa God long dispela taim mipela i ken bung wantaim ken as leaders of your people in this country Papua New Guinea. We praise you, we give glory to you for who you are, for all that you are to us individually as leaders and our people. Father this afternoon we have gathered again here together to discuss very important issues and you know them already. You’re a God who knows our past, who knows our present and who will always know our future. We thank you for this time, we pray for the guidance of your Holy Spirit as we debate issues, that you will give us the ability to see through, the issues that are raised on the Floor of Parliament. Thank you once again for this meeting. Thank you for all that you will be to us throughout this meeting. In your name Jesus we offer this prayer and we thank you for the prayer that you taught us to say. Amen.’

CERTIFICATION OF ACTS – STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform the Parliament that the Speaker has in accordance with *Section 110* of the *Constitution* certified the *National Emergency Authority Amendment Act 2023* that was made by the National Parliament.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS – STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I wish to inform the National Parliament that the visitors from the Delta Fly District Western Province and third year Journalism and Public Relations students of the University of Papua New Guinea are present in the Parliament Gallery. On behalf of the Parliament I extend the visitors a warm welcome to Parliament.

02/01

QUESTIONS

Protest by Koiari Landowners

Mr KEITH IDUHU – My question is directed to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Treasury can take note.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning I received numerous text messages from my constituents in Koiari, particularly the landowners of Sirinumu Development Corporation, Central Sogeri Development Corporation, Hogeri Development Corporation and Rouna Development Corporation. They have taken over the Rouna Power Station and put blockages on Rouna 1 and 3, the access points towards the water. This will affect the water supply to Port Morsby and over a million people in the city.

Mr Deputy Speaker, their claim is in relation to an outstanding commitment by the Government totaling a sum of K15 million, of which K10 million has been paid in the past and the outstanding is K15 million due for payment to these landowners.

As I speak, there is a peaceful sitting protest at Rouna and the police have attended to the issue and its very peaceful but it doesn't change the fact that power is running at 25 megawatts load shading and its very heavy and there is no undertaking from anybody whether or not power and water will be restored anytime soon.

Is there any reassurance by the good Prime Minister to our people of Port Moresby and PNG to hear whether the Koiari people would be settled very quickly, otherwise business houses and normal operations are going to shut down in the city?

Thank you.

Mr JAMES MARAPE -- Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I want to appreciate the question by the Member for Hiri-Koiari, and give my indication and assurance that the Minister for Commerce and Trade, Minister for State Enterprises and Minister for Finance and National Planning, and to our people of Koiari, who are the traditional custodians of the land from which the waters originates and supplies water and generate power to our city, their contributions is appreciated and its valuable.

The three ministers with the respective departments including yourself and the Governor of Central, if you all can assemble after this session and organise a time in which five of you or your representatives can meet our landowners to indicate to them that their grievances are to be settled at the very earliest.

The Treasury has released a warrant of K5 million and its in the system to be processed, but the landowners must indicate as to where exactly the distributions will filter to. This is not the first time the government has made payments to the same group of landowners. It happened in the past where one or two walked away with the money and the rest were left behind.

So, for the landowners it must be a transparent public process and they must be at one unified place with all the representatives there. And they must nominate the accounts in which the distributions will take place that represents all the interested landowners and their families. And this will be an example of what our government has structured going forward into the future, which is something that has never been done before.

Our coalition Government has passed a policy where the subsidiary company will eventually be taking over from what was Eda Ranu. This subsidiary will have an equity structure; where 60 per cent is held by PNG Water, 20 per cent held by the Koiari Landowners and those who live in the footprint of the pipeline and powerline into our city and the surroundings areas in Central. Ten per cent will be given to Central Provincial Government and 10 per cent will be given to the National Capital District Commission.

03/01

That is a long term business prospect that is being proposed . It has never done before for our important resource landowners up there in the Koiari mountains. This is in acknowledgement to the fact that they supply water that has been sought from their traditional land areas to us which benefitted the city and the surrounding areas.

But for the immediate K15 million that is being claimed as outstanding, K5 million has already been warranted. The Departments of Treasury, Finance and Planning has been looking through our government registry to ensure that the other K10 million is matched. If it is still

outstanding then at the very earliest a disbursement break up is proposed in the presence of the district member and the provincial governor, and the disbursement can take place.

I want to give assurance to our people of Koiari that we may have missed September but it is early October and the ministers and Water PNG and PNG Power officials will get to them at the very earliest. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Log Export Development Levy

Mr AGENA GAMAI – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to raise my series of questions directed to the Minister for Forest, if he is present.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before I ask my series of questions, I come from a district that has three logging operations in my electorate in Western Province. There is also another one in the North-Fly District as well. For almost four years, we haven't been collecting our log export levy funds in our province. That is why I will be asking these questions to the Forestry Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my series of questions are;

(1) Can the good Minister for Forest explain to the people of Western Province as to why we are not receiving our Log Export Development Levy (LEDL) for almost four years now?

(2) Can the good Minister explain where he has spent all these monies because our people are still waiting?

(3) What time will the Minister give monies to our provinces so we all can share it?

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr SALIO WAIPO – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and the Member for Delta-Fly for his series of questions. These are good questions that all members of Parliament, especially the ones in the coastal regions that have logging activities might have similar concerns in regards to the LEDL.

It has been quite a while now. The LEDL is remitted back to the Government, consolidated through Treasury. We were waiting for Treasury to release the funds to us, which they just did, and in this Parliament session, I will be distributing the LEDLs across the board to all members of Parliament. I want make this clear and assure all members of Parliament and their people in their respective districts that during this Parliament session, funds will be fairly distributed to you all.

In response to your second question in regards to where we spent these monies, we do receive the funds but it goes straight to the government who later releases the warrant to Forestry to distribute the LEDL funds to the members of Parliament.

04/01

I would like to thank the Marape-Rosso Government for amending the policy for LEDL guidelines. Previously we gave this to companies or Members of Parliament who took proposals directly to the department through departmental directors or MDs to fund companies directly or suppliers. This has now changed whereby the money goes to the provinces, and to the district so that under the District Development Authority and provincial FEC, you can deliberate on these funds and make a resolution. All the submissions will then be returned to us including acquittals of these funds. So, we are now strengthening the laws around these guidelines which used to be flexible.

So, let me assure you, member for Delta Fly, we will have a look at it and come back to you in due time. Thank you for your questions.

PM's Warrant Of Arrest

Mr JOSPEH LELANG – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I rise to ask a series of questions to our Prime Minister. Mr Deputy Speaker, recently there has been so much news going around the country that has raised a lot of uncertainties, questions and speculations in the minds of our people that there was a warrant of arrest issued for the Prime Minister. The news came out also that the Prime Minister had used police to prevent police officers from serving the arrest warrant on him.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have read that the Minister for Internal Security and Commissioner of Police came up in the main stream media saying this was fake news. Mr Deputy Speaker, that is the problem, they both did not sound convincing and that is why through you, I would like to ask the Prime Minister to come out and clear the air on this matter.

Mr William Duma – Point of Order! Mr Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister is not the Minister for Police. He is the Prime Minister of the country and if he is the subject of a complaint, only the Minister who is running the law enforcement agency can answer this question. You cannot ask a person who is the subject of an inquiry to answer your questions, Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, I think your Point of Order is in order but the question has already been asked to the Prime Minister so I will allow the Opposition Leader to continue his questions.

Mr JOSPEH LELANG – My series of questions are, Mr Deputy Speaker through you;

(1) Mr Prime Minister, can you deny or confirm that there was indeed a warrant issued for your arrest?

(2) If indeed there was, why did you not make yourself available to be questioned by the police, rather than use the privileges of that office to prevent being served a warrant of arrest or towards such effects?

(3) Mr Deputy Speaker, at this time –

05/01

Mr Jimmy Maladina – Point of Order! These questions are very speculative. There aren't any facts, we are just speculating and I think that question is out of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Member, I think the question was directed to the Prime Minister in this regard and the Prime Minister has shown indication that he will respond. So, I will allow the Opposition Leader to continue asking his question.

Mr JOSEPH LELANG – At this time where there is a lot of speculation on this matter.

Mr Pila Niningi – Point of Order! You are asking questions and making speculations against the Prime Minister in the People's House. You must have facts as proof. You cannot just go on making statements or questions. If you have a letter from the Police or the Police Commissioner; then show it to us and we must be able to see it. Do not make such speculations.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Mr Minister; I think you have raised the same point of order that the others have already raised. I have so far repeated that the question is directed to the Prime Minister and that we should allow him to make a response. So, we should also allow the Opposition Leader to continue with his questions.

Mr JOSEPH LELANG – The whole purpose of me asking this question is; so, the Prime Minister can clear the air on this issue.

Mr Rainbo Paita – Point of Order! I think as per our *Standing Orders* you cannot ask questions that are based on assumptions or make insinuations on the Floor. Questions must be

grounded with facts or some form of concrete proof. With due respect to the Prime Minister's response to the question, if we open up a trend like this; every time we will be asking questions on the Floor each time something comes up on social media especially *Facebook*. Therefore, it needs you to make a ruling.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Members, we have so much points of orders being raised regarding this question by the Opposition Leader; so I will ask him to rephrase his question and I will still allow him ask his question. But, in the meantime, I will seek further advice on the points of orders being raised as well. I can allow you to ask your question on the next question time. I will therefore stop you from asking your question now.

Mr James Marape – Point of Order! I know you have made your ruling and asked the Opposition Leader to rephrase his question but I would like to clarify here that the Prime Minister's Office is a very important office. The Prime Minister is the chief diplomat, and chief representative of this country. and there must be no shadow of doubt on the conduct of the Prime Minister.

And if I may through the Chair ask that the Opposition Leader to rephrase his question and ask again so that I can respond. This is so that the country is absolutely clear on matters that were raised. Now that he has already verbalized the issue; we are leaving it to the scrutiny of this country. It is not only on us as members of Parliament but the entire country and the world is observing this.

You need to give stability to the leadership and those who hold this office. I just want to ask the Opposition Leader through the Deputy Speaker to rephrase his question and I will surely respond. Mr Deputy Speaker, if that can be done today. It is important that the world and the country hears this. Thank you.

06/01 .

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Prime Minister your Point of Order is in order. As I've made the ruling, I will ask the Opposition Leader to rephrase his question in accordance to your statement made so that you can respond and clear the air.

Mr JOSEPH LELANG – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. This is a simple matter where we are airing a lot of things and I think it's proper that the Prime Minister must come out and clear the air so that we know exactly what is going on?

Thank you.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Deputy Speaker, I just want to appreciate the question as well as the defense on the government side but this has nothing to do with Mr James Marape as a person.

This is the office of the Prime Minister that has been brought into the spotlight and under scrutiny. I want to assure our country, that for instance in the conversation on the warrant of arrest, anyone can go to the court registry.

For the last 18 years that I have been a Member of Parliament, there has never been a warrant of arrest issued by the Magistrate or any magistrates for the arrest of James Marape up until today. It's a public record, warrants are issued by the courts and the District Court has not issued any warrant to date.

I want to assure this country that your Prime Minister has nothing in respect to breach of law, to be worried about. There is no added layer of police cover on my path. In case someone wants to play politics on this matter, it may not be from the Leader of the Opposition's Office, but speculations have continued to proliferate in the public space.

I just want to advise the country, the Prime Minister is the Chief diplomat of this country. The Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's Office and the occupants of the office promote and sell the country. Any inferences or labeling on the office stains the country's reputation also in the context. That is why I was willing to take the call.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the *Standing Order* states clearly and I forgot the exact provision but matters relating to court or perceptions, inferences and assumptions should not be raised on the Floor of Parliament.

I think this Parliament must be matured to understand that when you bring a matter before Parliament, it must be of substance. But I am pleased because it is a matter of public debate and the Opposition Leader had to do his job by asking the question and I have to do mine by replying so that the reputation of the Office of the Prime Minister is not brought into question.

There is no warrant of arrest, from my search in the court registries based on the social media spins that does get on in our public spaces.

To our investors, the citizens of this country and everyone concern including all of us here in this house, there is no warrant of arrest on the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister or any of us are subjected to the Laws of this Land and if there is one on such then we will make a respond in the due process, so I just want to give clarity to everyone that there is no warrant of arrest made on the Prime Minister.

We keep on seeing many negative spins in the public space and we are working towards public conversation accountability, whether it's in social media or the media proper that would be stepped up from our government perspective but I want to ask every one of us, let us be conscious of what we write in the public space. There might be many false and negative spin in the public space.

Some of the court cases that references have been made or some of the public corruption issues that reference have been made, James Marape as a person, has been state witnesses since 2013. As Finance Minister, I've been a state witness. As Prime Minister, I've been a state witness during the commission enquiry for the UBS loan inquiry which I set up.

07/01

If have something to hide, I will not set up the inquiry and its as simple as that. I want to get to the bottom of corruption matters in some of our more bigger outstanding cases. And people and businesses know they have everything to lose including businesses by creating files elsewhere, as covert decoy to the main issue.

Mr Speaker, I want to press on you, the police without announcing to everyone are waking up on the corruption matters before us. In Police files, the Commission of Inquiry that we've staged, we have engaged lawyers who are now making restitutions claims and their files are been worked upon to summon UBS Bank, summon in Oil Search as it was known before and summon major players in the UBS transactions. Unfortunately for my Oppositions, James Marape is a witness in the entire matter.

Engage Liaising Officers For Seasonal Workers

Sir PETER IPATAS – I want to ask few questions to the Honourable Prime Minister and the Treasurer to take note.

This is in relation to the program that we have signed up with the Australian Government in sending young people to work in Australia as seasonal workers.

Mr Acting Speaker, my province is one of the provinces participating in the programme and as the Minister for Treasury announced, we have about 1,800 seasonal workers in Australia.

In March, I was informed by my seasonal workers in Tasmania that they were having problems with the Employment Agency that brought them there. The name of the Agency is Links. And I approach the LMU within Treasury but unfortunately, they didn't do anything up until now.

Last week, I went to Australia to visit all my seasonal workers and was astonished to find that 130 plus that seasonal workers have not been working for over four months. They are living in a foreign country without employment. And these 130 plus have had their visas expired last week. We sent them to work to earn for their families; we allow the workers to go down to Australia thinking they will make money and come home.

Now these unfortunate workers are down there stranded without any money. When I tried to approach the workers to try and get them back into the country; they said, how can we go back; it's embarrassing, we haven't made any money and we do not have money.

Their visas have expired so Mr Prime Minister I'm just appealing to you, if you can contact the Australian Government to give special consideration to these workers so they can be given an extension of three to four months to make money and then come back to Papua New Guinea.

Mr Prime Minister, so much talk has been going on about seasonal workers and we need to beef up and liaise to work in Australia. I realised that there are people who have been appointed as liaising officers in Australia and we need to fund them so they visit our workers. There is an agreement between the National aGovernment of Australian and PNG Government but there are private business owners employing them. Now we must not just leave workers to the whim of this employers. I found that there are certain things that we need to do like; visiting our workers to ensure that they comply through the contracts.

Mr Acting Speaker, and I would like to ask the Prime Minister if he can have a conversation to ensuring that we fund liaising officers so they can visit our workers in Australia. It is a new setting as most of these people are coming from the rural areas of Papua New Guinea.

That is my basic question but I want to applaud this Government for engaging in the seasonal workers programme. As it is gives an opportunity to our young people who are unemployed to go and work in Australia and also has educational value.

08/01

They experience life down there and they should have a positive mindset when they come back home.

Congratulations to the Minister for Treasury in ensuring that this program is in operation. But I want to appeal to our Government to ensure that our workers are protected. We have to be there to ensure that they are not abused. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I want to say thank you to the Governor of Enga Province for the important question asked.

The seasonal workers that we are engaging under the labor mobility program with the Australian Government is something that has never been done before. We pursued the option of formalizing the engagement of Papua New Guineans to work in Australia under a temporary work visa and work arrangements that will see them get there do the job and come back to PNG with the money they've earned as well as the experience that they have been able to gain in that work arrangements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I just want to appreciate both the Morris Government and now the Labor Government that is very proactive in this space. They have indicated to us that they have allowed for 8,000 spaces for Papua New Guinean workers. They have also extended similar scope to all Pacific island nations to go and find employment in seasonal workers and possibly expanding to permanent work permits in Australia as they qualify in other trades and skilled qualifications.

This is an opening that we have never had before and I want to apologize to Governor for the 130 who are inconvenienced in the current arrangements. But for greater clarity the program that Treasury is running, if you come through this program, Treasury will have total oversight to ensure that the program is run and visa and employment requirements will run its course. There are some districts who are pursuing this opening on their own as well as other provinces. I want to announce through this question, this sort of experience might happen. And so we will look into this seasonal work arrangement to ensure to have one coordination here and all provinces and districts are given equal opportunity and they are calling on the people to be engaged which will be announced very soon.

Speaking from the top of my head, I want to indicate that we will not randomly pick any one off the streets just to send there. We want to send highly qualified people in terms of character and ethics. Those who are Christians, those who have good ethics, those who do not chew betel nut and smoke to go down there. We want to make sure that every district and province will participate in this and have a fair go. We will give you the requirements of the people we want you to select and upload into this program so that all of us have a fair go if the 8,000 space is opened up for this year or this session. So that every district and province has an opportunity to send some down there.

At the moment, the Office that the Treasurer runs is coordinating this program whether Treasury continues to run or goes to a specialist ministry, we will look into this. Because

Australia will open up employment of Papua New Guineans in a big way going forward into the future.

We want to, Mr Deputy Speaker, migrate from not just seasonal fruit picking but as they step down there migrate them into skilled training and we work with the Australia Government for skills training, nursing, care giving, carpentry, mechanic, plumbing, electricians. This will be a catchment of overlaying and sending young Papua New Guineans, especially those who have finished grade 12 and have good ethics, work ethics, character ethics. We want to migrate youth down there to work and get additional skills study down there, work down there and import back into your country the money you've gained as well as the skills so that you can assist our country going forward.

It's a big program opening like never before and Australia has given a specific visa line for this program and I want to commend Australia Government.

09/01

I want to inform this Parliament that we are working with the United States also in a similar line of site. We have informed the United States Government already that you come to us and sign DCA and do all these high-level Defense Corporation Agreement, but we also want you to open up study and employment opportunities for Pacific Islanders and PNG also in the USA.

So this will be a catchment for many of our youths out there that in November and December, the National Government will have a National Youth Mobilisation announcement in our country. Those who have dropped off at grade 12 and who are doing nothing in our country under the age of 30, we want to mobilise all these youths. They must go back to their church and get your character qualified and go to your districts. The first 8,000 to go and work and study in Australia, we will up load you going through these pathways. And instead of having a random selection on an ad hoc arrangement, where you find your visa refused and you return back here. Therefore, we want to tidy it up into one door by knowing who we are sending to Australia for seasonal work or study and get skilled and hopefully fit into Australian workforce also. Therefore, Australia has now opened up work opportunities for PNG and Pacific like never before and we want to capitalized this opportunity also. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Sir Peter Ipatas – Point of Order! You have not answered my question. These 130 workers went through the system that we have; the LMU, they failed to act on my inquiry in

March and now these people who went through our scheme are now stranded. They have no visa Prime Minister, so I am asking you to intervene and write to the Australian Government or liaise with them to grant them three or four months extra so they can work down. This is not our doing. It's the fault of the employer agencies and our LMU have been sitting around and have done nothing.

I have raised the complaint earlier and they didn't act on it and I had to go there in person because they are my people who are stranded. So, I want this government to tell the Australian Government to give the special consideration by granting them three or four months to work and earn money before they come back here. So Prime Minister, this has been done through our system and which is not working, so let's wake up and fix it. Thank you.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank Governor for the correction if it has been through our system. The Treasurer has given me indications across the bench that he will get his office to work on this issue. But I am sure the Australian officials sitting in the Public Gallery as well as the Australian Government will attend to this matter in the positive.

Australia has been our friend for so long and our friend today and forever. Lets not take this opportunity for granted. They have opened this to us in a big way and they want this and need the workers down there but they could also pick labourers from elsewhere. For us we are embracing this opportunity to fill in the gap in terms of job creations opportunity for our people.

So to the 130 affected they are our people we will reach out to the Australian Mission here at the earliest and they are listening to this request. But I will reach out to the High Commissioner to ensure that their stay is not affected and a breaching visa be offered to them to enable them to find employment because of our failure and the employers failure.

So Governor, your requests are handled and I am sure the Australian network will pick up this request and attend to it. But this afternoon, I will call the High Commission and I also thank Minister Stuckey and the assistance from Tkatchenko who had a key input into matters relating to foreign relations. Governor your matter will be attended to in the very earliest.

To the 130 people down there in Australia, I do not think the Australians will evict you right away but in any case, your government is on stand-by to assist you.

10/01

Power Outage In East Sepik Province

Mr ALLAN BIRD – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. By a way of background, I have been asking this question for over a year and the situation has deteriorated even more. These questions are directed to the good Minister for State Enterprise.

As I speak, East Sepik Province has been without power for almost 18 days. I first asked the question about 12 months ago when we were having power problems, and since then it has worsened.

My questions are as follows;

(1) Wewak needs a short term solution. As the good Minister knows, we have been in constant communication with KCHL and PNG Power. The East Sepik Provincial Government has offered every help that we can but in order for us to move forward, we need directions from PPL and KCHL because they own the power supply and we are simply clients.

The East Sepik Provincial Government has been doing everything it can but we need a short term solution fairly quickly because as I speak, the six generator sets that we have, have all suffered catastrophic failures. The new generator that the East Sepik Provincial Government helped to fund is still not operational. Our banks and business house have closed down and we have no power and no water. Puma Energy is unable to supply fuel to the town because they also rely on PNG Power in order to operate. So the town has come to a shuddering halt and we need serious help.

(2) What solutions can PNG Power and KCHL as the shareholder offer us?

(3) From my understanding, in the 2022 November Budget, this Parliament approved a US \$300 million policy-based loan to the State Owned Enterprises, and part of that borrowing is to upgrade power in the country. I am not sure if that US \$300 million has arrived in the country or if it has not.

Could the good Minister give this House, and of course my people of East Sepik and the people of Papua New Guinea, an update as to when this borrowing is likely to arrive and when can it be deployed to help alleviate the serious power problems that not only my province faces, but many other provinces around the country?

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr WILLIAM DUMA – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I also want to thank the good Governor of East Sepik for asking these very important questions again.

I will answer his last question first in relation to the US \$250 million ADB SOE reform loan. This was the tranche three and it arrived in our country in December 2022 after this Parliament had passed the 2023 Budget.

From my understanding, the money is still kept and it has not been allocated yet. We have to go through the normal budgetary process before the funds are released, not only to KCH but to fund other development agendas of this government.

In the case of PNG Power, thanks to the Government of Prime Minister James Marape; an amount of K200 million was allocated in this year, the final instalment of K28 million has been release., KCH now has a full complement of K200 million that was allocated in the Budget. This was never being done before by any government.

As we all know, these kinds of money have their own process to follow. They are public funds so we have to follow a normal tender system and money allocation processes before the funds are fully allocated.

For PNG Power, advanced monies have been released while waiting for a further amount to be released from the SOE ADB funds and the equipment that are needed have been paid for, especially for Wewak as our good Governor knows.

11/01

In the case of two gensets, there had been some technical issues. Those issues are quite complex such that we've had to arrange for experts from Korea from which these machines were imported to fly over to PNG to fix them and the expert is now in the country. He will be flown to Wewak tomorrow and hopefully he will fix the issues that are being encountered by these two machines.

We now have a full set of machines that are needed to power Wewak. Thanks to the ESP Government, they have not only sat back and complained but they have been proactive in helping us manage these issues. I can say that most of it is to do with technical as well as competency. It is not that easy to sack people on the spot. There are procedures that are being followed.

Sacking a person and of course, replacing him with another equally qualified person is another thing altogether so we are working very hard to fix those issues. It is not to say that Wewak has been without power for 18 days, its less than that. I can confirm that because I was in Wewak just recently but we are working very hard to fix these issues and we are sending a team tomorrow.

I must admit before Parliament that on many occasions, our own employees have let us down by misleading us. It is only when we intervene, such as myself, even the Prime Minister, that our own people, who are becoming our own worst enemies, start to get their acts together.

So, Wewak is a very important city and it happens to be in a province which I call a sleeping giant, in terms of its potential for economic development. We have been working very closely with the good Governor to locate an ideal location so that we can then help install a DFAT Solar Power Project. Funding has been identified and allocated; the money is there. We are working among ourselves with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Lands and the East Sepik Provincial Government led by our Governor, to locate an ideal land where we can then install the solar systems.

We will have a combination of gensets as well as solar, and further down into the future we are also looking at hydro powered project from two possible locations. One in Passam and another one further down from Wewak. We are working very hard and I can assure the Governor that there's certain things I can and can't do as Minister but he knows very well that I am giving my utmost attention and we will work together to solve this. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr RAINBO PAITA – Mr Deputy Speaker, before I move a motion to adjourn Parliament, I would like to, on behalf of my people of Finschafen, convey our deepest condolences to the people of Dei on the passing of their leader a week ago. I would like to place on record also on behalf of the Government, the Opposition side has lost a strong leader of the country and also the People's National Congress Party who also lost a party member. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 3.25 p.m.