

SECOND DAY

Wednesday 14 February 2024

DRAFT HANSARD

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SECOND DAY

Wednesday 14 February 2024

The Assistant Speaker (**Mr Jacob Kopi Maki**) took the Chair at 10 a.m.

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

Sitting suspended.

The Acting Speaker (**Mr Koni Iguan**), took the Chair at 10.50 a.m., and invited all Honourable Members to say the Lord's Prayer together:

'Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and forever, Amen'.

02/02

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS – STATEMENT BY THE ACTING SPEAKER

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I wish to acknowledge the presence in the Public Gallery of the National Executives of PANGU Pati. On behalf of the Parliament, I extend to the visitors a warm welcome to the Parliament.

QUESTIONS

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – The Honourable Members, yesterday I have reserved a supplementary question from the Member for Ialibu-Pangia Honourable Peter O'Neill and

told him that I will give him an opportunity to ask the first question today so I will give him this time.

Supplementary Question

Connect PNG Funds

Mr PETER O'NEILL – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. The supplementary question that I wanted to ask was in relation to the Connect PNG Program, which the Governor of Southern Highlands asked the good Minister for Works and Highways.

Mr Acting Speaker, as you know in recent times, I have issued public statements on this particular program stating that we do support the program and its intentions. But, Mr Acting Speaker, the only issue is about the spending spree, the procurement process and the manner in which this particular program is been managed by his department. I have made those statements publicly and the Minister has claimed that I was a liar.

So, today I want to seek leave of Parliament to present some documents that I've received from a whistle blower, a very brave public servant who has given me these documents that proves that what I've said is correct. So, if that is okay, I will table it for the interest of public and the Minister can take note of it and answer it while I will add my questions onto the questions that were asked by the Minister.

Mr Acting Speaker, I want to table this with your permission.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member for Ialibu-Pangia, you may table your questions.

Mr PETER O'NEILL – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, the series of questions that I want to ask the Minister are as follows:

Mr Acting Speaker, I have received a copy of the IFMS records from the Finance which shows that over the last 30 months this program has spent K1.933 364 152 000 billion, almost K2 billion has been spent so far. I have a list of cheques here with cheque numbers, contract numbers, and vouchers that have been paid to different companies under the Connect PNG Program.

Mr Philip Undialu – Point of Order! What we have been learning from his own press statement was eight months' payment of K3.7 billion to a company and K1.7 billion to another

company and now he is saying 30 months which is almost three years. He already mentioned, 30 days from eight months. Please stop causing confusion.

(Members Interjecting)

03/02

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Governor of Hela. Your point of order, is out of order.

Mr PETER O'NEILL – The good Governor should just be patient and I will get to it.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Member for Ialibu-Pangia, this is question time, and as you have made some statements already, can you get to your point?

Mr PETER O'NEILL – If they had not continued with points of order, I would have been done by now.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Ask your question!

Mr PETER O'NEILL – Mr Acting Speaker, let me say this, these are not personal monies, these are public monies. Money that belongs to the people of Papua New Guinea. They need accountability and transparency. When of course, the government makes decisions and carries out these programs. About K1.9 billion has been spent on a program, as I said is worth billions, including contracts that are awarded up to K3million to K5 million. Contracts are already awarded and there are ongoing programs so we would be very interested to know so the Minister's statement must include a list of contracts that he has awarded.

Mr Acting Speaker, let me just highlight a few.

Mr Richard Masere – Point of Order! I just want to clear the point that the good Member for Ialibu-Pangia has made. He said the Minister gave out the contracts. The contracts are actually given out by the National Procurement Commission and not the Minister.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, your point of order, is out of order. I will ask the Member to complete his question and the Minister can respond accordingly.

Mr PETER O'NEILL – Mr Acting Speaker, I think he knows exactly what I mean as he has been seen publicly, photographed and has had videos done, handing out cheques to the contractors and it is for the first time a Minister of state is doing this in this country.

This is not a simple matter.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member, I will ask you to please ask your question.

Mr PETER O'NEILL – Mr Acting Speaker, there are few contracts that are glaring because they have just been given to associates of the Prime Minister and of course those of the Minister.

Can you clearly define how much money has been paid and I have tabled some of the documents but we need to know;

- (1) How much money has been paid to Ipwenz Construction?
- (2) How much has been paid to Tari-Pori Development Corporation?
- (3) How much has been paid to Construct Oceanic?

Mr Jimmy Maladina – Point of Order! *Standing Order 145* is very clear. He can't mention names when he is asking questions on the Floor of Parliament. This rule is very clear and he is calling the names of the companies and he can't do that. He should only ask questions and he should not be debating the issues and the Minister responsible will answer those questions.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member for Ialibu-Pangia, please resume your seat, I will make a ruling on the Minister's Point of Order. Honourable Minister, your point of order is in order!

Mr Allan Bird – Point of Order!

(Members Interjecting)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Governor of East Sepik, we have a point of order and I have not completed my ruling as yet.

04/02

I am ruling in favor of what the honourable Minister has raised in his point of order and I will ask the Honourable Member for Ialibu-Pangia to rephrase his question as he continues.

Mr Allan Bird – Can I correct the Point of Order? The *Standing Order* says ‘persons’ and not ‘companies’. So I think the good member is misleading you and the House.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Members the Chair has made a ruling, the interpretation of this *Standing Order* is that names of companies are included as ‘persons’. So I made a ruling and the ruling will stand.

Honourable members, I allowed the member for Ialibu-Pangia to raise his question as a supplementary question but then I came to realize that his question is a new question that is directed to a different person on the Floor. The question asked yesterday was directed to the Prime Minister.

The supplementary question should be directed to the Prime Minister and not the minister for Works. Therefore, Honourable Member for Ialibu-Pangia, I will rule out your question and you can reserve your right to ask it at a later time and I will give you opportunity again to raise your question.

However, since you already have the floor I will now ask you to direct that question to the Prime Minister. Thank you.

Mr PETER O’NEILL – I have no problem directing the question to the Prime Minister but Mr Acting Speaker, the question by the Governor yesterday, if you go back and check the *Hansard*, it was directed to the Minister that is why it is a supplementary question but I’m quite happy to ask the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has taken note of what I have said, so I’ll just continue if that’s okay with the Chair.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – I will allow you to continue. Please go ahead!

Mr PETER O'NEILL – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, this company Ipwenz Contraction is owned and controlled by an associate of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister can either confirm or deny that but we ask that they table all the contract documents and the amounts of money that has been paid to this particular company. This includes Tari-Pori Development Corporation, Construct Oceanic and Clean Green Energy.

Mr Acting Speaker, I ask this question because we believe that some of the procurement process have been abused. Many of the contracts have been issued deliberately under the K10 million thresholds and paid on many occasions below that amount to avoid the tender processes and the procurement requirements by the NPC law.

(1) Mr Acting Speaker, we need visibility on that and the Prime Minister needs to disclose his relationship with the owners of the company and his roles in those companies.

(2) Mr Acting Speaker, the Minister for Works has a company that was awarded a contract from this particular program called Tumla Construction, owned by one of his former staff. Again it has received tens of millions of kinas. I am quite happy to mention the name of the gentlemen but out of respect I cannot. Mr Acting Speaker, the company is called Tumla Construction. These contracts again were issued below K10 million deliberately to avoid the procurement process.

Mr Acting Speaker, we also obtained information that there were 18 soldiers who received payments of K191, 600.13 per person, out of this program.

(1) What are these payments for?

05/02

Secondly, Mr Acting Speaker, there has been many hire cars but one in particular has been receiving K101,000 per month.

(2) Can the Minister clarify this payment?

Mr Acting Speaker, this is Connect PNG program.

(3) Why was K785,209 spent for planting flowers at the Minister's head office.

Mr Acting Speaker, a medical evacuation fee of K220,700 was paid to Pacific International Hospital for the Minister.

(4) Was that fee paid for the medical evacuation of the Minister to Gold Coast, Australia? How does that connect to the Connect PNG program?

Furthermore, Mr Acting Speaker, there was a payment of K170,000 being made to a school in the United Kingdom for school fees for an individual.

(5) Can the Minister clarify how that connects to the Connect PNG program?

And lastly, Mr Acting Speaker K152,800 was paid to Sunday Bulletin, how does that connect to Connect PNG program?

Mr Acting Speaker, we are asking these questions because the program itself is good program, except that money is being spent on things we don't know about. Mr Acting Speaker, that is abuse of trust and confidence of the people of this country. I simply ask the Minister to answer these questions fruitfully and fact fully with the records that they have, not just shallow answers that will water down this particular issue. This is a very big issue, K1.9 billion plus has been already been spent.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – I am happy that the Member for Ialibu-Pangia has said we must all tell the truth. And I am happy that some leaders that used to say that he used to lie a lot are with him on the other side.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Acting Speaker, I am happy that he has stated that Connect PNG program is very important for this country because for so long we have left many remote parts of our country unconnected. When I talk about remote parts of the country, I mean Telefomin, not because the Minister for Works is from Telefomin but they have been out of link with our country for so long. I mean places like Kabwum, Menyamya, etc.

In 2020, the Honourable Chris Haiveta, Governor of Gulf province who was then Minister for Works at that time appointed the present Secretary for Works who was an appointee under the O'Neill administration.

Mr Allan Bird – Point of Order! The questions were very specific in relation to payments and we've already acknowledged that Connect PNG is a good program, he doesn't need to make a speech, he just needs to respond to the question.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Governor, your point of order is in order. The Prime Minister is starting to get to that, he is trying to respond so I will allow him to continue.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Acting Speaker, I am really happy that my brother the Governor of East Sepik is super excited on the other side.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr JAMES MARAPE – That's part of the job, we have to get used to it but I'm coming around to get to the series of questions that the Member for Ialibu-Pangia has asked which deserve a fair, correct and serious reply. There is an assertion that the program that is meant to unbundle rural PNG as well as modernize urban PNG is being abused by the department that is meant to be delivering it. There is an assertion on the Floor of this House that Department of Works is not working very well. The Department of Works is led by our longest serving Secretary whom the former administration appointed. We came in, and like a good government, we allowed the department head to remain and lead. By the way, the departmental head is from his own electorate.

Mr Keith Iduhu – Point of Order! Can the good Prime Minister answer the questions, in the interest of time?

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member, I will allow the Prime Minister to respond to the question.

06/02

Mr JAMES MARAPE – And so, I want to rephrase that since we took office, we have retired over K2 billion worth of outstanding contracts of the former government which were never paid off. That includes Lae roads; the four-lane road from Lae City to 9-mile, continuing on to Yalu Bridge, and now to Nadzab. When we talk about Connect PNG, that is Connect PNG.

It is not only the roads that the Opposition Leader conveniently uplifted for the convenience of this occasion. I want to assure this House –

Mr Peter O'Neill – Point of Order! The Prime Minister is misleading us by making statements that are not relevant to the questions that I asked. I have asked questions about companies that have got an association with him.

He has to disclose whether he has got an association and has declared those interests or not. There is nothing wrong with those companies working and applying and getting contracts. But there are processes that are established that needs to be respected and implemented.

Those are questions that we are asking, not about roads and secretaries. You are running around trying to avoid the issue. This is public money and not your private money. You do not pay for medical evacuations of ministers out of this program.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – This is a statement under the pretext of a point of order. And so, you need to make your assertion in this House. Point of orders are point of orders, not statement that camouflage under the pretext of point of orders.

The Honourable Member for Hiri-Koiari's Point of Order was in order, but the Point of Order raised by the Member for Ialibu-Pangia is completely out of order.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Prime Minister, please resume your seat.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Order! Order! Order! Honourable Prime Minister, allow the Chair to make a ruling on the point of order.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – The Honourable Member for Ialibu-Pangia, your point of order –

(Members Interjecting)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Members, don't put words in the mouth of the Speaker.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Let the Speaker make a ruling. Your point of order was a statement but I will rule that it is in order. I will ask the Prime Minister to get to the point.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Acting Speaker, if you all care to give attention to the Minister for Works, he will present a detailed statement later on. We are not here to cover impropriety or illegal transactions. The Finance Minister has asked for independent audit firms to look into Works Department.

I do not own Ipwenz Construction Limited, Tari-Pori Development Corporation, Construct Oceanic Limited or CIVPAC. There are 300 plus contractors engaged in the Connect PNG program all over this country. I do not even own Wild Cat Developments Limited.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Wild Cat Developments Limited was tasked to do a contract in West New Britain Province which never eventuated. The former Prime Minister refinanced that and gave it to another Chinese company to do that.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Check who owns Wild Cat Developments Limited?

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Deputy Opposition Leader, we have a first Point of Order from the Member of Ialibu-Pangia.

Honourable Member for Ialibu-Pangia, your point of order will put us in order but do not make a statement.

Mr Peter O'Neill – I am not making a statement but I am explaining the incorrect statement that the Prime Minister is making in regards to Wild Cat. I used to be a shareholder of that and I have declared that.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member for Ialibu-Pangia –

(Members Interjecting)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Order! Order! Order! Honourable Member, the Speaker wants to talk. Can you listen to the Speaker?

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr Peter O'Neill – interjecting

07/02

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member, it seems that you are not listening to the Speaker. I will rule your point of order, out of order.

I will let the Prime Minister to finish.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, what is your point of order again?

Dr Kobby Bomoreo – Point of Order! Allow the Member for Ialibu-Pangia to make this the last Point of Order and do not entertain anymore point of orders from him.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, you cannot make a ruling on this. I will rule your point of order, out of order.

From the Chair, I ask you not to raise such a point of order again.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Prime Minister, continue!

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Acting Speaker, I do apologize for holding up the Parliament's time and getting on with what seems like nonsense but it is a serious matter.

The Minister for Finance has called for an independent audit firm to look into what is happening in the Department of Works. We are not here to allow for impropriety or breaking of the due process for procurement so if anyone is found to be breaking the law then the process will take its course.

I welcome the Member for Ialibu-Pangia, we set up ICAC. ICAC is run by overseas commissioners. Present the reports to ICAC, Police and the Ombudsman. All our leaders' declarations are before the Ombudsman. I have never sat in Cabinet issuing contracts to a company which is owned by myself. We have a new process in Cabinet where there is a process of voting under my leadership in Cabinet. We do not unilaterally disclose or declare what is happening instead we seat and preside over the matter. The former Minister who served in my Cabinet knows very well that there is a provision of declaration of interest inserted into my Cabinet which has elevated the level of transparency and we take a vote in every decision and not unilaterally pushed down by the Prime Minister like what the former prime ministers did.

Mr Acting Speaker, we are tidying up the mess that we have inherited. Connect PNG is linking every part of the country, put to the table, all contractors doing work in all parts of our country. This is a five-year program that we are running that embraces K7 billion worth of contracts throughout the entire country and not just Tari or Mendi or Telefomin Contractors.

I ask you all to pay attention to the statement from the Minister for Works which will be presented. We will also get an inquiry into this one because the country has been asking through the Opposition which they are entitled to ask as the alternate government so we will get a full look into what is happening.

I can assure this House, that Mr James Marape has no shareholding in the companies that have been mentioned. These are matters being brought up right in the face of the Vote Of No Confidence to discredit the captain of Government on this side.

You are at total liberty and you accused these companies today, saying one company picked up K3 billion. There is no record of such; under the letterhead of PNC Leader's own statement, it is on record and is out there, my friend it is contested. You know these companies,

under your watch you awarded a contract to seal the Ialibu-Pangia which is withstanding sealed road for the last 15 years.

Mr James Marape does not own a company, since I have been a member of Parliament from 2007 up until today.

Mr Acting Speaker, that is a record. I have seen former prime ministers owning companies and doing business whilst in office. I am a public servant prime minister and I am here to do my job.

With these accusations, the Minister for Works is asked to offer a full reply –

Mr Allan Bird – Point of Order! There is no law that says that a member of Parliament or even the prime minister cannot own a business but the rule says that you should declare your interests, so I just want to take away the innuendo that it is a sin to own a business because that is what the Prime Minister is insinuating. So, if you could just make that clarification?

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Governor, your point of order is in order.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Acting Speaker, I did not say a prime minister should not be doing business. All I said is there are two divides; a public servant orientated prime minister like myself and business oriented prime ministers of the past, some were and some weren't, there is a clear difference, you have your choice. Some have interest in business or shareholding business and they held the Office of the Prime Minister, good; I am not saying that they did anything wrong but some of us choose to remain a Public Service orientated prime minister.

08/02

And so I will assure this House that the companies that the Member for Ialibu-Pangia has mentioned have no shareholding interest by James Marape. I also pay special mention to Tari-Pori Development Corporation. It's a council company with 51 per cent owned by my councillors, 49 per cent owned by 200 small shareholders of Tari district. They're doing work only in Tari district. Show me a PNG company who can go and work in the Tari district. I ask this honest question; can you go and work in Tari district? And so, let's ask this question in the context of distribution of work that is happening. Some of these contractors operate in the far, remote corners of this country where former governments giving contracts valued at hundreds of millions in the city, these city contractors cannot go and work in the remote areas. Let's

speaking in the context of what is happening. The Minister for Works will deliver his statement and you will see the scope of contract, value of contract, stage one of unbundling the rest of the country, stage two and stage three. This program intends to transform our country. If there is any act of impropriety in the Department of Works, they will pay the due price. You have seen us terminating secretaries, suspending secretaries, we don't owe it to anyone. The inquiry or investigation that will be happening at the department will ascertain all the allegations that is taking place and I want to assure this house we are in the business of doing it correctly for our people.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS - EXTENSION OF QUESTION TIME

Motion (by **Mr Keith Iduhu**) agreed to –

That so much of *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent the time for questions without notice this day being extended by 20 minutes.

Connect PNG Development Trust Fund

Mr KEITH IDUHU – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker and that's only because the other side decided to come a tad bit late this morning. Mr Acting Speaker, my question is that under the Connect PNG Program there are two legislations that underpin this program.

One is the *Road Maintenance and Fund Act* and the other of course, is the *Connect PNG Implementation and Funding Act*. These legislations read together underpins the implementation of the program. Under it, there is a fund that is supposed to be set up, a trust fund, Connect PNG Development Trust Fund. *Section 6*, under that legislation also, therefore, the multi-year financing program is to happen in such a way that 5.6 per cent of the annual budget is to be underpinned and quarantined in that fund for the program to be implemented. That fund and this program is to run for a period of 20 years from 2020 to 2040. We are barely into the third year and we've already expended about, as the Prime Minister said, K2 billion to K3 billion now.

Mr Acting Speaker, according to the documents that have been tabled this morning, there's about K50 billion rather K7 billion under contracts presently being managed under this program. The questions are;

- (1) Has this Connect PNG Development Trust Fund been established?

Mr Rainbo Paita – Point of Order! Mr Acting Speaker, the question yesterday by Governor of Southern Highlands was specifically not on Connect PNG but was about contracts and payments. What he's asking now is a completely new question, Mr Acting Speaker. When you say supplementary, its must be on the specific question that you asked. I'm just saying for procedural purposes when you put a supplementary, its supposed to be on the specific question. This is a new question, Mr Acting Speaker. Thank you.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, your Point of Order is in order. I was listening to the Member while he was asking his question to pick up whether that would be a supplementary or a new question. I've come to see that the question he is asking is a new question and is not related to the previous question asked.

09/02

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – It seems that you are asking a new question because the context of it doesn't relate to the previous question you asked so consider it as a new question.

Are you directing your question to the Prime Minister or the Minister?

Mr KEITH IDUHU – I want the good Prime Minister to take note and answer because it's a big program.

(1) Has the trust fund been established and if so, the road fund board has the authority to manage these funds? Because that's the contemplation of the law.

Mr Acting Speaker, the IFMS printouts tell us that the implementation of the program has been done outside of the intent and purposes of the 'Connect PNG Legislation' and therefore it's highly illegal

The Prime Minister has expressed that there will be an independent audit conducted of the program starting from its procurement up to its implementation.

(2) Will that independent audit be won by one of the big fives outside of the public service or is it going to be done through the Auditor General's Office and briefed out to an independent audit team either by Deloitte and Touche, PricewaterhouseCoopers or KPMG to do this job?

10/02

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Member for Abau, your point of order –

(Members Interjecting)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Members, let the Chair make the ruling and don't advise the Chair. Your point of order is in order but I will ask you again not to add additional questions to the questions being raised by the Member.

So I will let the Prime Minister continue.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I will get straight to the point. Current procurements are done within the National Procurement Commission under the watch of the National Procurement Commission within the Provisions of the *Public Finance Management Act*. No procurement that is happening in our country is procured outside of the due process.

Mr Keith Iduhu – Point of Order! The question was quite specific. Has the road fund board and the trust fund been established, as required by law, since 2020? That's a yes or a no question.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Member, you seem to be repeating your question to the Prime Minister. I'll ask the Prime Minister to continue.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – All right, I'm coming to the technicalities of the issue. Every year, when it is alive, a financial operational year, there is no point for a trust account facility to be utilized. Every year, we draw down from the budget, I speak to you as a former Finance Minister. The trust fund whether it's established, is something we will inform you about. But every year, for instance; this year, the much talked about K350 million transferred to the Works Department, it is a live financial year in transaction. Money warranted, drawn to the implementing agency and paid to bills that are on the table. And there is no need to utilize a trust facility in an operational year. Works Department has a trust accounts facility and I will get the Minister of Works and Highways to deliver his statement and we'll get the Finance

Minister to call for an audit, every one of you is welcome to participate in this audit that will take place. Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Pogera Mine Operation and Benefits

Mr AIMOS JOSEPH AKEM – I have three questions to direct to the Minister for Mining. But before I do, I thank the Chair for recognizing the people of Lagaip for the first on record. I also thank Prime Minister Honourable James Marape and the Pangu-led government for giving us a new district in Lagaip and Porgera. I also thank the people of Lagaip District for giving me the mandate as MP for the maiden district.

With that, my questions are as follows:

(1) What is the status of Porgera Gold Mine now? When will the production of Porgera Gold Mine start?

I know that the agreements and negotiations have been concluded but I haven't seen the mine in operation.

(2) In regard to the mine benefit sharing agreement, I, as the leader of Lagaip and Porgera, am interested to know who is benefiting from the benefit sharing agreement of the Porgera Gold Mine.

I know some landowners and Enga Provincial Government and the National Government is taking the lead in 49 per cent and 51 per cent benefits. However, the Lagaip Porgera has been one district for the last 48 years and it's my first time representing Lagaip on its own. I want to ask if this government has any benefits left for the people of Lagaip.

The Porgera Mine maintenance operation, after the closure of the mine, we have Porgera Maintenance operation going on right after the closure of the mine and it's still going on now.

(3) So, I want to know at which cost is the mine maintenance operation still going on. If it's tied to the agreement, then who is responsible for paying for the mine operations and maintenance?

11/02

Mr MUGUWA DILU – Thank you, Member for Laiagap for asking this very important question relating to the Porgera Mine. Firstly, I want to thank the Government for negotiating a better deal for the country and for the project. About 51 per cent for the state, 36

per cent will be held by the Kumul Minerals on behalf of the State, and 15 per cent will be for the Enga Provincial Government and the landowners.

Better deals were also negotiated for Wafi, in Morobe where 30 per cent will go to the State whereby 21 per cent will come in the form of various benefits through social sustainability, infrastructure development grants and basic grants. I would like to commend the Marape-Rosso Government for taking these steps in negotiating better deals for the State. In terms of Porgera, there are power transmission lines that have fallen and the road access going into the mine area needs to be cleared before it commences production.

At this stage, the Porgera Mine is being cleaned up and they are in the process of ramping up production when the mine is in full swing, hoping to produce 500,000 ounces of gold. Hopefully, this will be realized later in the first or second quarter.

In relation to benefit sharing 36 per cent will be given to the state held by Kumul Minerals, 15 per cent will be given to the Enga Provincial Government with the landowners. The landowner compensation agreement is still in the negotiation stage and that will be concluded anytime soon. And we hope to get the mine up and running in full production.

For the mine maintenance, I will have to consult with my department and the Mineral Resource Authority staff, and will get back to you.

Whilst I have the opportunity, I would also like to comment that I will bring to this Floor the revised *Mining Act*.

We have been trying to amend very important clauses in the Act which has been delayed for a long time. I have consulted the industry and my three departments and we need to extend the exploration license term from two years to five years because practically you cannot complete any exploration within two years. We have to give enough time to the exploration holders to have five years to complete the exploration and they can decide whether to progress towards a mining lease or not.

Another very important amendment that I will bring to the House is the amendment relating to the *Mining Safety Act*. This act currently prohibits our women or females who are employed in this industry from going underground. And with the Papua LNG coming on board, we need technical experts to make progress not only in Papua but the others like Porgera and Wafi. These are minor amendments yet very important so I will bring to the Floor which should see females being allowed to go underground mining. Another issue is the Mineral tendering; we have struggling bound fields, like the Woodlark and also Mt Kare.

Mr James Nomane – Point of Order! The good Minister has already responded to the question and we also have some questions without notice to present to the Floor.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Yes, your point is in order. Honourable Minister, you have already responded to the question. I will take note of what you have said and allow for a new question.

12/02

Mr JAMES NOMANE – We had a situation here on Wednesday 10 January 2024 which is now referred to as ‘Black Wednesday’ and we were all out of the province and our capital city Port Moresby

(Members Interjecting)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Deputy Opposition Leader, what is your question?

MR JAMES NOMANE – My question is directed to the good Prime Minister, Honourable James Marape. When this happened, I was quite surprised, and one of the things I have to stress to you and the House is that every member of the Parliament here is equal. Whether you are the prime minister, minister of state, you’re just a member of parliament or a backbencher or Governor, everybody here is an equal. When we come here and then we start to fail to respect the quality of members of Parliament mandated by their people and their respective districts and electorates, we start to see that we have problems. So when we are talking about Black Wednesday, I was the first one to resign and I am entitled to my opinion just like members on the other side who are entitled to theirs and I respect your position.

My question is, this all emanated from total economic mismanagement of how we budgeted, how we failed to take care of the police, how we failed to administer the budget in the Treasury and Finance –

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable Deputy Opposition Leader get to your question.

Mr JAMES NOMANE – So my question is, the good Prime Minister has taken heed of my call to sack his Treasurer, so can he also extend that and sack the Minister for Internal Security? Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr James Marape – Point of Order! Firstly, let me congratulate the Member for Chuave for being elevated to the position of Deputy Opposition Leader. He deserves this, he has been wanting always to be elevated so now he's being elevated to Deputy Opposition Leader. I want to say that though we took heed of removing the Treasurer, the Treasurer has not been removed. He is still a member of Cabinet assisting me in treasury matters.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER – Honourable members, as the Parliament resumes tomorrow, I will allow the Prime Minister to respond to the question raised by the Deputy Opposition Leader. I now interrupt Parliament and we will now suspend for lunch to allow for the committee to sit and deliberate on the motion that is being put before the Acting Speaker. Therefore, we suspend for lunch.

Sitting suspended from 12 noon to 2 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 2.01 p.m.