

2024-24

AUTONOMOUS BOUGAINVILLE GOVERNMENT

Tuesday, 19th March 2024

First Day

DRAFT HANSARD

[Table of Contents](#)

Corrections to Daily Draft Hansard	2
Announcements	3
Questions Without Notice	4
Motion to Extend Question Time	17
Ministerial Statement – Health.....	23
Debates on the Health Statement.....	27
Ministerial Statement – Police.....	38
Update on Inter Parliamentary Relations Events in 2023	42
Motion to Adjourn	46

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

CORRECTIONS TO DAILY DRAFT HANSARD

The **Draft Hansard** is uncorrected, and it is also **privileged**, therefore Members have **one week** from the date of issue of this Draft Hansard which to **make corrections to their speeches**. Until the expiration of this one week, Draft Hansard must not be quoted as a final and accurate report of the debates of the House of Representatives.

Corrections may be marked on a copy of the **Daily Draft Hansard** and lodged at the Hansard Office.

Corrections should be authorized by **signature** and contain the **name of the person** making the corrections.

Corrections should relate only to inaccuracies; new matters may not be introduced.

LORETTA MASIRIA
Acting Principal Parliamentary Reporter

First Day

Tuesday 19th March 2024

The Speaker (Hon Simon Pentanu) leads the House in its First Meeting for 2024

Mr. SPEAKER - This is our first sitting for 2024. Let's look forward to a successful year of meetings, deliberations, and tackling hard issues. I hope that we can achieve many of the matters that will be debated and deliberated on the floor of this House. From the Chair, I am confident that we have made significant progress in terms of achievements through the executive, backbenchers, and the services that have brought us this far. With these few words, let's join together in the Lord's prayer. (The Speaker leads the House in prayer.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Honorable members, I have a few announcements. The first announcement is regarding a program led by the Deputy Speaker. She has arranged, for the first time, a spouses' program. They will come to see what we all do in the Chamber and gain an appreciation for the role of Members, as they have partnerships at home with you all. They can also understand some of their responsibilities in supporting Members by witnessing proceedings here.

There were some initial meetings today, and they will have a briefing tomorrow. The program has been organized by the Chair, and on your behalf, I congratulate the Deputy Speaker for this initiative, which is supported by the parliamentary partnership between the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives. I want to acknowledge the spouses who are already here at the back. Welcome to the House to observe our sessions.

Leave of absence, I have only one. The Honorable Member for Baubake seeks leave. We grant him leave because he is unwell. So I put it to the House, is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Now, some announcements regarding committee meetings:

- Public Accounts Committee: Your meeting is scheduled for 9 am on Thursday in the JSK Conference Room.
- Legislation Committee: Tuesday, 4 pm in this Chamber. That will be today.
- Bougainville Independence: 9 am on Thursday in the Chamber.
- Tourism and Culture: During lunch hour on Thursday in the Chamber.
- South Regional Parliamentary Committee: 7 pm in JSK.
- Good Governance: Wednesday, which is tomorrow, during lunch hour in the Chamber.

- Economic Development: Wednesday at 9 am in the Chamber. That's tomorrow before the Parliament meets.
- Health and Education: On Wednesday, during lunch hour in the Parliament Resource Center.
- SRC (Salaries and Remuneration Committee): On Friday at 9 am in the Chamber.

One other announcement: On Thursday, the Bougainville Constitutional Committee that is going around has put together a draft constitution. The Attorney General, the Chairman, and the Deputy Chairman have sought an arrangement to brief the Members on its progress. You may have questions you want to ask. We are going to adjourn the House on Thursday at noon until Friday. Then we'll have Thursday afternoon, from 2 pm, this briefing by the Commission, Bougainville Constitutional Commission.

I think it's important. They want to explain and present the first draft to you before taking it back to the constituencies. So, that's happening on Thursday, starting at 2 pm. We can reconvene for the meeting on Friday at 10 am.

Today, the Leader of Government Business advised me that there may not be ministerial statements; however, there might be some. Once any statements are addressed, we will proceed with committee business. I anticipate a report from the Deputy Clerk. Following that, we will adjourn the House. This adjournment means that you can initiate an adjournment debate. Members will have the opportunity in the adjournment debate to discuss various matters, including grievances. Anyway, we'll address that in due course.

Now, questions without notice. Honorable Members, questions without notice for forty-five minutes.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Shipping Service

Mr. TAEHU PAIS (Member Atolls) - Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question without notice concerns the shipping service. Before I ask my question, Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide some background. Without a shipping service in the Atolls, there will be no progress on projects.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, my question without notice is directed to the Minister for Works. I also urge the executive government to take note. What is the update on the new ship that was budgeted for in the supplementary budget for K7 million? Is your office aware of its progress, whether it be in terms of construction or funding? Has there been any development? This is the first point.

Secondly, also regarding the shipping service, are there any updates on MV Chebu? I am considering utilizing all available resources for transportation to the Atolls. This is the second point.

Thirdly, staying on the topic of transportation, what is the status of MV Tulele? I would like an update on this matter.

Fourthly, regarding the K5 million allocated for a ship for the Atolls by the Prime Minister, we are growing weary of discussing ships without seeing any actual vessels serving the people of Bougainville.

Minister, can you please highlight or provide insight to this Honorable House on the status of all these matters? As a leader representing the people of the Atolls, it pains me to continuously face the same problems. I must emphasize that this should be the final occasion I raise this issue. Therefore, a response regarding the ship is imperative. Who is accountable? Because my office, as a member of the Atolls, remains uninformed. We have not received any notifications.

Previously, the Member for Atolls was significantly involved, and the office of the Member for Atolls was regularly updated on the status of any building structures or ships allocated for the people of the Atolls. I urge this government of the fourth House to ensure that a ship is provided before the end of the term next year, which is only eight weeks away. It's not eight months, but merely eight weeks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. JOSEPH MONA (Member Lule/Minister Works) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Honorable Member for Atolls. I will address your question regarding the new ship for the Atolls.

The last time I spoke with the Regional Member, he mentioned placing an order for that ship, which is currently under construction in the Philippines. Therefore, I need to follow up with the Regional Member to obtain the latest update.

Regarding shipping services to the Atolls, I understand that some private ship owners are providing services. Additionally, I believe, Honorable Member, you are among them. So, what obstacles are preventing you from operating a reliable service to the Atolls? I suggest operating it as a commercial service, similar to other private owners of PMVs (Public Motor Vehicles). They operate their PMVs, and the public utilizes them by hiring them, thus contributing to the local economy's progress.

During our previous conversation, I emphasized the importance of establishing an economy in the Atolls. Setting up growth centers is crucial. With such centers, the shipping service can become profitable. It can transport goods to centralized business hubs, facilitating economic activities such as the collection of sea cucumber and Trochus shell. This approach will foster business operations and economic growth in the region.

Point of Order

Mr. ROBERT S HAMAL (Member Hagogohe) - Point of Order Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - What's your point of Order?

Mr. ROBERT S HAMAL - Minister, I urge you to provide a comprehensive response to the Member for Atolls. We seem to be caught in a cycle, discussing ships that are unreliable for servicing the Atolls. This poses significant risks. The boats you mentioned are too small and precarious to operate effectively.

It's evident from the Member's remarks that there are concerns about the lack of infrastructure development in the Atolls. They are seeking a better solution than what is currently being proposed. Avoid diverting the discussion to small boats and the Member's ownership of Solwara Meri. That's not addressing the core issue at hand.

Furthermore, when we do charter boats and request funds, there is reluctance from the government to fulfill these financial obligations. Therefore, I implore you to provide a satisfactory response to the Member for Atolls. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Honorable Member for Hagogohe, I believe the Minister is within his rights to respond to the question. Additionally, he is informing the House that he has engaged in discussions with the Member for Atolls. However, Minister, perhaps some of your explanations could focus on the most practical approach to establishing an economically viable shipping service. I think the Member for Hagogohe is seeking clarity on this matter.

Nevertheless, I believe you are making progress in addressing the questions. Thank you.

Mr. JOSEPH MONA - Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the comments from the Honorable Member for Hagogohe, I would like to address the issue of MV Sankamap. Given its size, the management would likely be aware of its operational capabilities. It appears that operating this ship to the Atolls was deemed uneconomical. Therefore, it underscores the necessity for the Atolls to establish their own economy.

Regarding MV Tulele, it's important to clarify that this ship is not under the jurisdiction of DTS (Department of Transport Services). MV Tulele is owned by Bou & CO, a company responsible for its operations. Consequently, DTS has no authority over this particular vessel.

Point of Order

Mr. TAEHU PAIS - Point of Order

Mr. SPEAKER - What's your point of Order?

Mr. TAEHU PAIS - Mr. Speaker, my question is, is there any update?

Mr. SPEAKER - Hon. Member for Atolls, you also asked the question on the MV Tulele, on Chebu, so let the Minister continue, please.

Mr. TAEHU PAIS - But please, let me clarify again, Mr. Speaker, please?

Mr. SPEAKER - Is it in response to your questions?

Mr. TAEHU PAIS - I want to know. You have your roads that are connecting the mainland. I want my road to be connected. Don't talk about the management of the past.

Mr. SPEAKER - Hon. member,

Mr. TAEHU PAIS - Talk about what you can do.

Mr. SPEAKER - Hon. Member, you are now debating the issue. Let the Minister answer the questions, please.

Mr. TAEHU PAIS - Okay, you answer me correctly. Thank you.

Mr. JOSPEH MONA - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Member for Atolls. In response to the question regarding Tulele, it's important to note that Tulele is owned by Bou & Co, a private company. As the Department of Transport Services (DTS), our role is primarily regulatory. We cannot compel the ship to operate into the Atolls since it is owned by a private entity.

I recall a recent instance where we requested the ship to travel to Soroken, but the captain refused, citing the ownership by Bou & Co rather than DTS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. MELVIN WILOLOPA (Member Lato) - Supplementary?

Mr. SPEAKER - Supplementary, Member for Lato.

MV Tulele

Mr. MELVIN WILOLOPA - Thank you, Minister of Technical Services, for your response. I have a question regarding MV Tulele. As the government of the day, do we have any plans to ensure that this ship, currently inactive, becomes operational and meets the requirements of NMSA (National Maritime Safety Authority) to serve the people of Bougainville?

Furthermore, I would like to inquire about Bou & Co. Who is Bou & Co, and how did it establish operations in Bougainville without adhering to the regulations set by the local authority? Thank you

Mr. SPEAKER - Honorable Members, I believe that for the previous questions, the Vice President responded extensively.

Point of Order

Mr. MELVIN WILOLOPA - Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe the response we are receiving is inadequate. As a government, we have a responsibility to take action. Significant funds have been expended to bring this ship into Bougainville. Therefore, as the governing authority on the ground, we must explore avenues to ensure this ship becomes operational within Bougainville.

Mr. SPEAKER - Thank you, Member. I think the vice president will respond to this.

Mr. PATRICK NISIRA - Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to offer assistance to the Works Minister. Regarding MV Tulele, may I ask, through the Chair, the Member for Hagogohe to explain how they acquired this ship and how it arrived in Buka? Thank you.

Mr. ROBERT H SAWA - Is that okay Mr. Speaker?

Mr. SPEAKER - Sorry, did you say Member for Atolls or Hagogohe?

Mr. ROBERT H SAWA - Hagogohe

Mr. SPEAKER - Member Hagogohe. Okay, I give you leave to give some explanations.

Mr. ROBERT H SAWA - Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The procurement of MV Tulele was initiated by me and the late Honorable Raymond Masono. The Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) allocated K1 million towards the acquisition of this ship. Bou & Co is a Bougainvillean company, and the Vice President is aware of this arrangement.

The vessel was purchased with funding of K9 million from a Korean agency because Bougainville lacked a vessel. This initiative was undertaken in collaboration with the late Raymond Masono due to the needs of our Atoll Islands. It's crucial to address this missing link.

The ship traveled from South Korea for sixteen days to reach Bougainville. It transited through the Philippines, enduring storms and tornadoes along the way until it finally arrived here. Therefore, as a responsible government, we must address the issue of NMSA's requirements and take appropriate action. The notion of a "rusty ship" is unwarranted given the journey it undertook to reach our shores.

Point of Order

Mr. PATRICK NISIRA - Point of Order Mr. Speaker.

Mr. ROBERT H SAWA - No wait.

Mr. SPEAKER - Hon. Member please, I'll get the point of order. Let's discuss this properly.

Mr. PATRICK NISIRA - Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All I sought was a brief explanation of how that ship came to be here. The response has been provided, and now, if I may, allow me to continue.

Mr. SPEAKER - Honorable Member for Hagogohe, I believe you have already provided an answer. Let us now allow the Vice President to explain the government's perspective.

Mr. PATRICK NISIRA - Members of the House, as you have heard, the ship was purchased under the Momis/Masono Government with assistance from Hamal. Despite my earlier explanation, it seems there is still some confusion, so allow me to clarify once more.

The ship sailed directly from Korea to Bougainville waters and arrived at Buka Wharf. Upon learning of its arrival, NMSA conducted an investigation, entirely independent of ABG. Subsequently, NMSA, as the maritime authority, declared the ship unseaworthy. It's essential to understand that ABG had no involvement in this determination, so please refrain from attributing blame to ABG.

Furthermore, when the ship reached Bougainville, its registration had expired, and it was registered in Sera Leon, a different country altogether.

When NMSA inspected the ship upon its arrival, an arrangement had been made that led to the establishment of a joint company called Bou & Co., as mentioned by the Minister. However, despite this arrangement, Bou & Co. was unable to take any action because NMSA intervened and halted operations. One of the key issues identified by NMSA was the lack of adequate sleeping quarters, even for the captain. NMSA stipulated that this issue must be rectified before the ship can be operated.

So, that's the situation. Regarding the Quaran investor, and with all due respect to the Member for Hagogohe and Taehu Pais, when we were in discussions with them to come aboard, they promised to send someone to address the issues. However, the Quaran investor never followed through, and despite assurances from the Regional Member to assist, no action was taken. Consequently, when NMSA intervened, the situation became more complicated.

Just recently, about one or three weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, customs condemned the ship because Bou & Co. failed to rectify the issues identified by NMSA. As a result, customs has repossessed the vessel and intends to put it up for tender to dispose of it. Initially, this ship was purchased for K1 million from Korea. While the investor claims to have spent K9 million, as also mentioned by Hon. Hamal, the ABG only contributed K1 million. However, not all of this amount was paid to the Quaran company. Approximately K700,000 was disbursed from the K1 million allocated for the ship's purchase.

During our discussions with the Quaran investor, who asserted spending K9 million, no fruitful outcomes were achieved. Therefore, it is unfair to blame the Works Minister or the ABG for this predicament. When the Toroama/Nisira Government assumed office, we endeavored to rectify the problems left behind by the previous administration. Unfortunately, despite efforts to address the issues from the outset of the ship's arrival, the situation has not improved. To summarize, customs has now taken control of the ship, bringing an end to these discussions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the discussions on the ship, Member Taehu has raised the issue of the K5 or K7 million allocated for the new ship. The Regional Member has claimed various things about procuring, constructing, or ordering it. These multiple assertions have led to confusion, Minister for Works. However, the truth of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that the allocated funds are still held in Finance. Honorable Member Taehu, no one has accessed that money, despite the Regional Member's claims of obtaining it for ship construction in the Philippines or Malaysia. The funds remain untouched in Finance.

Another complication arises when ABG seeks to implement projects, but the Regional Member insists on redirecting the funds into his account. Mr. Speaker, I hope this clarifies some of the misinformation. However, I wish to avoid repeating myself. The last time I responded to this matter, it was raised again. Member Taehu, please refrain from further interruptions. It's worth noting that you, too, acquired a ship, MV Sankamap 2, which eventually suffered damage.

Allow me to continue, Mr. Speaker. While the people of the Atolls may voice complaints, Member Taehu, it's important to provide some context for your constituents. When you first entered the office, MV Sankamap 2 served as your primary mode of transportation, akin to a highway. Unfortunately, due to its previous use, the ship sustained damage. Similarly, when Mr. Pasisni succeeded you, he acquired another vessel, MV Rapois, which also incurred damage after a short period of operation. Subsequently, when Masono assumed office, he procured MV Tulele. These endeavors represent the ongoing efforts of Members from the Atolls region to improve transportation infrastructure, albeit with challenges arising from the acquisition of older vessels, which, according to their assessment, may be considered unfit for service.

Mr. Speaker, it wouldn't be far-fetched to say that the challenges you are facing are a result of past decisions made by leaders. Recognizing this, ABG earmarked a budget of K7 million to procure a new ship for the people. We should commend the government for acknowledging past shortcomings and taking steps to rectify them by endeavoring to secure a new vessel for the Atolls. The allocated funds are available, and the government is willing to assume responsibility for our people's needs in technical services. However, the funds remain unused. Let's find a solution to purchase a new ship for the Atolls.

The previous ships were old and used, resulting in damage. Learning from this experience, Minister for Works, we should expedite the process of acquiring a new ship. However, you raise a valid point about considering the size of the vessel. It's crucial to select a manageable ship size; otherwise, it may pose challenges. Perhaps we should explore options such as acquiring a barge or a vessel suitable for serving the people of the Atolls. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. EMMANUEL-CARLOS KAETAVARA (Member Baba) - Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - We will allow only one supplementary question since the main question has been thoroughly addressed. However, I will grant you the opportunity to pose your supplementary question.

Status of Chebu

Mr. EMMANUEL-CARLOS KAETAVARA - If I am mistaken, please feel free to correct me, but I would like to inquire about the ship. If this topic isn't suitable for a supplementary question, I can pose a new one. Additionally, could the Minister provide an update, either the Minister for Works or the Minister for Commerce, on the status of Chebu? I believe this is a pertinent question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Status of Chebu, Vice President or Technical Services Minister. Vice President.

Mr. PATRICK NISIRA (Member Halia/ Minister Economic Development) - Thank you. MV Chebu is indeed our ship, a symbol of our partnership. Currently, it is undergoing maintenance and is situated in a dry dock. BBCOL is overseeing the maintenance activities as part of our partnership with the Lae Biscuit Company of the Chow Family. We anticipate that after the dry dock period, the ship will be operational once more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. CAROLINE POLI (Member Mahari) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question will concern two Ministers, but just by sitting down,

Mr. SPEAKER - Member, you ask one Minister first.

Siara/Korepovi Development Project

Ms. CAROLINE POLI - Yes, I understand. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've deliberated on which Minister to address this question to, and I've decided to direct it to the Finance Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I proceed, I would like to extend my appreciation to the spouses who are present here today. Thank you for your participation in the program. Your role within the Toroama/Nisira Government is highly valued, and we are grateful for your presence.

Now, my question is directed to the Finance Minister and pertains to the Siara/Korepovi road development project. To provide some context, the road development initiative commences from the Siara junction and extends to cover the first ward in my constituency. Mr. Speaker, the road construction from Mahari to Teua has come to a halt. Progress has been made, particularly in prioritizing Kaviki Betarao, and addressing the missing link. However, the road construction has stalled at the first ward of Mahari Constituency.

I kindly request the Finance Minister to inform us, the people of Mahari and Kunua, whether there are sufficient funds remaining to resume the work. Considering the recent adverse weather conditions and river-related challenges experienced last week and two weeks ago, we are eager to ascertain if the road construction will recommence and if adequate funding is available to extend the road work from Mahari towards Teua Constituency. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. ROBIN WILSON (Member Terra/Minister Finance) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member for Mahari, for your question. Upon reviewing the accounts earlier this month, it was noted that rollover funds allocated for the road amounted to approximately K1.4 million. To the best of my knowledge, I have not authorized the release of these funds through any warrant authority. Therefore, I can confirm that these funds remain available. Thank you.

Transport Board

Mr. PATRICK KOLES (Member Haku) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several questions without notice.

The first question is directed to the Minister for Economic Services regarding the transport industry. We are witnessing discrepancies in PMV fares and hire rates among truck and small vehicle owners. Typically, the transport industry involves two partners: service providers and owners. Do we have a land transport board in place? If so, when will it become operational? If not, when can we expect to see progress in this regard? Rising fuel prices often coincide with deteriorating road conditions on the mainland, leading owners to impose exorbitant charges. It is imperative to establish a land transport board to regulate and monitor these issues in alignment with fuel price fluctuations. However, many fuel providers tend to increase prices promptly but are reluctant to decrease them when warranted. Who oversees and regulates this matter? Where is the Independent Consumer and Competition Commission (ICC)? This constitutes my first question.

Key impact projects

My second question is directed to the Finance Minister. During budget consultations, we were advised to prioritize key impact projects to stimulate growth. I submitted four significant projects aligned with our seven-sector programs. However, upon reviewing the budget, I observed that these projects were fragmented into smaller initiatives that failed to yield substantial impact. I had requested only four major projects consistent with our sectoral programs.

Therefore, I want to inquire about the possibility of a supplementary budget to address this issue. Alternatively, would it be feasible to request a re-scoping and reallocation of funds to prioritize our key impact projects? What impact will these small allocations have? Additionally, some constituencies have been allocated significant sums of money, and I am concerned whether they will effectively utilize these funds or simply retain them without progress. This question is directed to the Minister for Finance.

Mr. SPEAKER - Member, please go to your question.

Mr. PATRICK KOLES - I will stop here with these two questions. Thank you, very much.

Mr. SPEAKER - We need to direct questions to a single Minister to avoid confusion. Since you have already posed a question to the Minister for Finance, please keep your questions brief to allow other Members the opportunity to ask theirs.

Mr. SPEAKER - Technical service to respond and then the Minister for Finance.

Mr. JOSEPH MONA - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member for Haku. The establishment of the transport board falls under my ministry and department. We are currently developing a policy to support its establishment. This initiative is crucial, as we anticipate that the board will not only regulate the transport sector but also contribute to increasing ABG's revenue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - I will now allow the Minister for Finance if he has a response.

Mr. ROBIN WILSON - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member for Haku, for your question. Unfortunately, you may not have been aware of the K1 million allocation for each constituency. As we were formulating the budget, we requested Members to submit their priorities. It appears that you may have missed this opportunity, but we can certainly address this oversight.

Regarding the possibility of a supplementary budget, it is indeed under consideration, especially if we receive positive feedback from customs regarding the release of outstanding funds. These funds would be new and not initially budgeted for. Therefore, a supplementary budget would aim to incorporate

these additional funds, potentially allowing us to address the concerns raised by the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. MELVIN WILOLOPA (Member Lato) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for granting me the opportunity to speak. I have several questions, but I notice that some Ministers are absent, and I urge the Vice President, the Finance Minister, and the Cabinet Ministers to take note.

My question is directed to the Technical Services Minister. The Member for Haku briefly touched on the budget, and the Vice President also mentioned the funds withheld by the Regional Member. I also acknowledge the Member for Central in the National Parliament, who may also take note of this question.

Alignment of Infrastructure Projects funded by ABG & National Government

My inquiry concerns the coordination between ABG and National Government leaders, and I will address it to the Technical Services Minister. I have several questions. Firstly, do we have a plan to align infrastructure projects in Bougainville with the budget allocated to ABG by the National Government? Towards the end of last year, we witnessed the Regional Member withholding some funding, which affected many projects in Bougainville. They established a trust account, and I would like the Vice President and the Finance Minister to also take note of whether this trust account is legal. If it is legal, who are the signatories? As a government, we should be aware of this information.

The other question I want to raise is: we are now in 2024, and next year will be the elections. Have we assessed the performance of technical services in terms of delivering what we have budgeted for in the budget book? Every year we come and pass this bill on the floor of parliament. I think last year, in the last sitting, I asked a series of questions regarding a very large sum of money being paid to certain contractors, whereas the projects require highly skilled technical engineers for implementation.

Payment made to Contractors – Desalination Project

An example is the water desalination plant, worth around K9 million, of which K5.9 million has already been paid to the company. Minister, I would appreciate an update on the progress of the water desalination project. When we allocate such funds, it impacts the implementation of projects in the constituency, which are crucial for preparing our constituencies for independence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to raise these questions.

Mr. SPEAKER - I will allow the Technical Services Minister to respond, and regarding the Trust Account, I will allow the Minister for Finance to respond.

Mr. JOSEPH MONA - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member for Lato, for the insightful question. You inquired about plans for infrastructure development alignment in Bougainville. The reality is, that there are multiple stakeholders involved in infrastructure development across Bougainville. We have open Members overseeing DDAs, the Department of Technical Services managing restoration development grants projects, and the Regional Member with their projects. To address this fragmentation, the Department of Technical Services intends to create an infrastructure master plan. This plan will comprehensively outline all infrastructure projects in Bougainville, including their costs, ensuring alignment among all stakeholders. Currently, such a plan is not in place.

Regarding the desalination plant, transparency and due process are paramount. While K5.8 million has been disbursed for the project, an additional K800,000 is being requested. However, the Department of Technical Services is awaiting confirmation of the plant's arrival before proceeding. Despite our efforts, we face challenges due to the involvement of various stakeholders beyond our control.

Since assuming office, we have made significant strides in project delivery. From March last year to the present, we have tendered and completed approximately one hundred and thirty-eight projects, compared to just fifty-one projects tendered between 2020 and 2023. While this demonstrates progress, it's essential to acknowledge that some projects have faced issues. This summarizes my response. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Minister for Finance, the question on the trust account.

Mr. ROBIN WILSON (Member Terra/Minister Finance) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for addressing the issue of the trust account established by the Regional Member, which occurred late last year. It is my understanding that the Regional Member established this new account based on advice from state solicitors. The ABG was not involved in these discussions, and we only became aware of it when attempting to implement certain BEC decisions. It became apparent that funds were being redirected to this new account.

Thus far, Mr. Speaker and esteemed Members of the House, I will elaborate on this matter further in my ministerial statement, but I must highlight that K38 million from the PM's commitment has already been transferred to this new trust account. As for the legality of the account and the identities of the signatories, I am unable to provide answers, as I was not involved in its creation. The ABG was not consulted in this matter. While there may have been communication with the former finance minister, no such communication occurred during my tenure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - The Vice president wants to also make some remarks on these.

Mr. PATRICK NISIRA - Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to voice my support for our Member for Atolls. ABG can purchase a new ship, yet we find ourselves discussing trust accounts.

There are funds available, with K7 million allocated in PIP under the control of the Regional Member, and an additional K5 million held by the Member for North Bougainville. Together, this amounts to K12 million that could be utilized to procure a new ship for the people of Atolls.

However, the challenge arises when the blame is shifted onto ABG, when in fact it is the National MPs who claim ownership of the PIP funds. This is the reality, Member for Atolls. Just last week, during the DDA meeting for North Bougainville, it was rumored that the K5 million was intended to be divided to purchase smaller ships that may not meet the standards outlined by Member Taehu.

Yet, we have a unique opportunity here with K12 million provided by the National Government, split between the Regional Member with K7 million and the Member for North Bougainville with K5 million. Despite this, the blame continues to be directed at ABG. Member for Hagogohe is aware of the situation and understands the implications.

I direct my message to the Minister for Finance and urge those close to these two Members to engage in discussions to determine the best course of action for the people of Atolls.

Thank you. I would like to acknowledge the Member for Central Bougainville at the back. Your presence here may facilitate the liaison between the parties involved, as the funds are currently within our reach but not under our control. Mr. Speaker, these funds are held by the National Parliament.

The establishment of this new trust account has presented a significant challenge for all of us. As mentioned by the Finance Minister, there is K38 million in this account. What complicates matters further is that our restoration development grant will be diverted into this account. We received a letter indicating that all previous monies, including those from the prime minister's commitment, will be deposited into this account, along with the K38 million. However, for such a substantial sum to be utilized, it must be done so within a legal framework, either through the National Government's budget or the ABG Budget. As of now, we are uncertain about how these funds are being utilized and under what budgetary framework.

This uncertainty poses a significant problem for us. As ABG members, we should not be complicit in such practices. Ultimately, it will be ABG that bears the blame for any mismanagement of these funds. This situation risks misleading the people, and if the K5 million allocated for the Atolls is misused to purchase small ships, the blame will fall on ABG rather than Hon. Francesca.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize the importance of protecting the reputation of ABG from individuals who seek to tarnish it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Question time has lapsed.

Point of Order

Mr. EMMANUEL-CARLOS KAETAVARA - Point of Order Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Question time has ended. Forty-five minutes have lapsed.

Mr. JUSTIN BORGIA - Point of Order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - What's your point of order, Member?

Mr. JUSTIN BORGIA - Mr. Speaker, as it's the beginning of the year, I would like to request an extension of the question time for another twenty minutes to allow additional Members the opportunity to ask questions. Thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER - Okay, I seek leave to suspend the Standing Orders. For how long do you propose to suspend them?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – EXTENDED TIME FOR QUESTIONS

Motion (by **Mr Justin Borgia**) agreed to –

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

Mr. SPEAKER - Okay, I seek leave to suspend the Standing Orders for twenty minutes. The question is that the Standing Orders be suspended to extend the time for questions by twenty minutes. All Members, please stand. This requires a majority. Clerks, please count the heads. I believe we have the required number. So, yes, question time is extended by twenty minutes.

Mr. EMMANUEL-CARLOS KAETAVARA - Supplementary question Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Supplementary question?

Projects listed in 2023 – not listed in 2024 Budget

Mr. EMMANUEL-CARLOS KAETAVARA - I'll be quick. In response to the Minister's mention of a hundred and thirty-eight projects, I find it concerning that none of these projects are in my constituency, and I suspect this sentiment is shared across the floor. Now, I'd like to ask about the projects listed in last year's budget that are absent or marked with a zero in this year's budget. Are the funds for these projects allocated elsewhere, or are they still available? Some of these projects, particularly road developments, are crucial for our constituencies. As 2025 approaches, many areas still lack essential infrastructure. Can we expect these projects to be implemented this year? And who bears

responsibility for their execution, the ABG or are some funds under the responsibility of National Members through the DSP? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. JOSEPH MONA - Thank you, Member for Baba, for this insightful question. Most of last year's projects have been consolidated under the miscellaneous category in this year's budget. However, I've advocated for these projects to be itemized to provide clarity on each project and its respective budget allocation. This would facilitate smoother tendering processes by technical services. As such, many projects from last year can be found under the miscellaneous category. I believe the Finance Minister can offer further clarification on this matter.

Mr. ROBIN WILSON - Mr. Speaker, thank you. I appreciate the input, Member for Baba. For those Members who have copies of the 2023 budget and the current 2024 budget, if you find your project missing in the 2024 budget, I urge you to refer back to the 2023 budget, including the supplementary budget. If you still cannot locate your project there, it is likely categorized under miscellaneous in the current budget. You can then approach our department, and we will provide you with a comprehensive list of projects covered by the K15 million allocated to miscellaneous expenses.

What occurred was the issuance of warrant authorities. Including these balances in the budget would have inflated our figures substantially, resulting in an inaccurate budget. Therefore, we consolidated all projects for which warrant authorities were issued but not fully implemented or partly implemented under the K15 million miscellaneous allocation.

If your project falls into this category, please feel free to visit us, and we will furnish you with the relevant details. Additionally, I want to inform Members that toward the end of last year, I initiated a process to involve the finance department in each department's operations. This involves collaborative sessions with technical services, during which we review all projects and funds to identify any implementation issues and seek solutions.

We have conducted similar sessions with various departments, sitting down with each to address any issues. Most departments have already been engaged in these discussions, with a few exceptions. Earlier this year, when the accounts were opened, representatives from technical services, education, health, and the police departments attended. During these sessions, we discussed the significant high-impact projects undertaken by these departments and sought to identify any challenges they were facing. Many of the issues we uncovered were simply due to miscommunication.

It became apparent that a lack of communication between departments led to misunderstandings about available funds. I emphasized to these departments that there is more than K250 million sitting idle in the accounts and questioned why there was a misconception about the availability of funds. I urged them to inform me immediately if there were any funding issues.

Furthermore, it's important to note, as mentioned by the vice president, that if there is funding under the Prime Minister's commitment for 2023, half of it has already been utilized. Any remaining funds will be allocated strategically. Similarly, balances from the 2022 Restoration Development Grant (RDG) and funds allocated for Priority Impact Projects (PIP) are available for use. We are committed to utilizing these funds to implement projects effectively.

In the 2023 Restoration Development Grant (RDG), the allocated funds should be available, but unfortunately, they are not. In December, there was an unprecedented error made by certain individuals in the finance department. They mistakenly deposited the money into the wrong account, which was an exceptional occurrence in the history of the ABG. When we brought this error to their attention, they transferred the funds to another incorrect account. This mistake happened twice, which is quite unusual in my experience.

As of now, the K72 million allocated for the 2023 RDG has still not reached the ABG accounts because, for the second time, it was deposited into the wrong account. We have once again raised this issue with the relevant authorities. It's concerning to witness such errors, and it reflects poorly on the National Government. If the National Government fails to uphold its constitutional obligations, then it shouldn't exploit the same Constitution to impede our quest for independence. Thank you very much.

Mr. SPEAKER - Member for Nasioi who has extended the question time.

Mr. JUSTIN BORGIA (Member South Nasioi) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to address this question. My question is directed to the Minister of Economic Services, and I urge him to provide the best possible response. My inquiry pertains to the status of ABG projects that have been ongoing over the years up to the present moment.

Given the short time frame before next year and the impending deadline for the declaration of independence in 2025, we must receive an update on the progress of these projects. These projects represent significant commitments made by the government, and we need to understand how they have advanced.

One of the projects of concern is related to a plane crash issue. I am aware that the government allocated funds to address this matter, and I would appreciate an update on the current status of this project.

Additionally, I am interested in the Tinputz Tuna initiative, which received financial commitments from the ABG. I request information on the progress made and any developments related to this project.

Furthermore, I would like to inquire about the status of the Toniva Water project and the gold refinery in Arawa. These projects are critical for our internal revenue generation, and I seek clarification on their current status.

Other projects of interest include the Manetai Limestone project and the investments made in Panguna Mine and BSP. I understand that efforts have been made in these areas, and I am eager to learn about the progress achieved thus far.

In summary, I am seeking an overview of these projects to assess their current status and their potential for revenue generation as we approach the independence declaration date. It is essential for us to be well-informed about the progress of these projects and to have confidence in their ability to contribute to the development of our economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. PATRICK NISIRA - Thank you. I will start with the plane. I repeat myself. I think in the last sitting, I responded to that question. I will not say much because if I talk too much you might forget. The plane that crashed was an investment and the money has been returned to the ABG Account under Bougainville Wings Limited. The money has been returned. Unfortunately, some deductions were made, and I think only K4.8 million was returned. I think maybe there were some costs involved.

This project is an issue that some Ministers petitioned the chief secretary with, and that's why the chief secretary resigned after the senior appointments committee pressed charges. So regarding this project, the money has already been returned. Thank you.

Regarding the gold refinery in Arawa, I will make it very clear. The project is ongoing. They are implementing it, but the ABG did not spend any money on the project. The investor is solely spending money on this project.

About the water bottling, the machinery has arrived in Lae. ABG has paid all the fees, and the machinery should arrive in Kieta and move to Toniva. We should have our first mass-produced spring water out in Bougainville and sold out hopefully by June this year. After all the machinery arrives, two engineers will come from China and install this water bottling plant. After installing and testing, we can produce the first Bougainville water.

With regards to the other economic projects, I will get a good update from the department, and I will brief us. I am happy that you raised this question today, but sometimes, the economic projects that we put in place are criticized by the Members. And when we shoot it down, we tend to jump to other projects again to try and get updates. This is not good. Whatever project that we establish, it must be supported by everyone. We support it until it produces results.

One very important project this government started is the Bougainville Savings and Loans which is now in operation. I don't know if the Members are supporting it by going to invest in our own savings and loan bank. In the past, you have been asking about this, and after it was launched, as the Minister, after listening to questions being raised on the floor of parliament, I expect Members who have been raising

related questions to go and invest money in savings and loan and we progress the work of savings and loan here.

With this Mr. Speaker, any other projects, I will address them in my ministerial statement. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, for the constituency development grant, and constituency investment program, I want the Members to go to the office, and they will assist you to get your funding so you can implement your project. I've heard some Members complaining and you are arguing with the community government. This is not something for you to argue about. I am making myself clear here. The constituency development program should be driven by the Members and not the community government members.

Don't come to me with complaints that we are arguing with the community governments. I want you to take the initiative, and come to the department, and the department will assist you in accessing the funding of K220,000. Before Christmas, we paid K50,000 each to the Members who met the criteria. It's simple. You go, fulfill the criteria, and you get your money. Stop complaining. The money is available, and the Finance Minister made it very clear that there is money for this project. I ask the ABG Members to come and access your funding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Mr. MATHIAS SALAS (Member North Nasioi) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Lands, and I think DPI is not present. The government decided to buy back Kuruwina Plantation from the title holder. This land was under the manager's receivership, and they bought it. I know how much they got this title of ownership.

Although there were two official valuations done on the plantation based on agricultural lease valuation, it was concluded that this plantation must be bought back with less than K1 million. And the government made this decision to buy it with K4 million. What formula did they use to buy back this agricultural lease? If they did the valuation, did they do the valuation under the improvement covenant on the plantation or the improvement covenant?

This question is directed to the Minister for Lands. He can inform us, and support can come from the Minister for DPI. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. JUNIOR TUMARE (Member Makis/Minister Lands) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to Member North Nasioi for asking such an important question regarding the Kuruwina decision.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the government's acquisition of the Kuruwina Plantation to execute some of its plans. Currently, we have temporarily suspended these plans as we await the valuation report. We intend to thoroughly review this report and then provide recommendations to the government. As of

now, we have placed this matter on hold until we can assess the valuation report and advise on the purchase of the land. That's the answer I can provide at this time. Thank you very much.

Mr. SPEAKER - Member for Konnou

Mr. WILLIE MASIU (Member Konnou) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know of Black Wednesday, which happened on January 10th this year in Port Moresby. There were 22 deaths, and over K1 million worth of properties were either destroyed or stolen during this time. My Question Without Notice will be directed to the Minister. After this issue, a high-ranking officer who was the Assistant Commissioner to Police at that time, Mr. John Wagambie, was suspended for 21 days by the Acting Police Commissioner at that time. Mr. Speaker, we later heard that ACP Wagambie was going to be sent to work in Bougainville. On behalf of my people, all the things that he did in Port Moresby, in terms of not working with the Police to stop what was happening on that day, 10th January 2024, Mr. Speaker, Bougainville is not a dumping place to send people such as him. Mr. Minister for Police, so far we have not heard any more about his transfer to Bougainville. My question is for the Minister to update this House and the people of Bougainville on this matter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Minister.

Mr. SPEAKER - Minister for Police.

Mr. JOHN BOSCO RAGU (Member Tsitalato/Police) – Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the Honorable Member for Konnou. We have all seen the statement by the Attorney General in response to Commissioner Manning and also the statement by the Honorable President. We are all clear on the Peace Agreement in regards to big appointments; consultation must take place between Commissioner Manning – RPNGPC and the President. Since this incident, we heard that ACP Junior Wagambie has put in his request to the Commissioner not to come to Bougainville. I have my trip, and when Finance is ready, I will make this trip to see the RPNGC Commissioner to consult more on some potential officers of high ranking with RPNGC and the Bougainville Police to serve under the current Chief of the Bougainville Police Service, Mr. Togura. BEC recently extended his term for a further three months, and it is important further consultation needs to take place. I will also put forward to the Commissioner what is happening in Bougainville, and I hope you will understand my proposed trip and also that Wagambie has been withheld and not to come to the Region. His posting is to change ACP Vanua because his term expired, but he has been reappointed to look after traffic in Port Moresby. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Member for Kokoda. This is the last question.

Mr. RODNEY OSCIOCO (Member Kokoda) – Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question Without Notice is to the Minister for Finance. We approved the Budget and K1 million is for the Independence Readiness. I know the Members know about this, so they are not asking any questions to the finance minister regarding when this funding will be made available. This funding is for this year, and next year

we will be talking about independence. I would like to know when we will be able to access that funding because the people in our constituencies are already prepared to implement the projects that have been lined up. Thank you.

Mr. ROBIN WILSON - Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the Member for Kokoda for your very good question. My short answer is: I don't know when this funding will be ready. We all know that our RDG is normally accessible in June. During the first half of the year, we usually receive bits and pieces, and ongoing onwards is the time they usually provide us with more. They don't give us all the funding at once. I am hoping that money is allocated so the members can work on their projects before this year ends. I will keep the House informed on the latest status regarding the 2024 RDG. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Honorable Members, the question time has lapsed with the extension. We have two Ministerial Statements by the Minister for Health and the Minister for Police. I recognize the Minister for Health.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT – HEALTH

Hon Dennis Lokonai

Mr. Speaker, I rise to present to this Honourable House and the people of Bougainville the progress update on the Status of the health sector programs and initiatives my Ministry and department has made to date since I was appointed as Minister in March 2023.

Mr. Speaker, my ministry and department is taking a concerted effort and a strategic approach to improve access to health services and address the challenges affecting provision of health care to the people of Bougainville.

As we all know, health is one of the core priorities of government that contributes to enhancing quality of life. The department delivers a number of key programs based on its strategies and annual work plans. These programs form the core of the health system core programs and these include the following: -

- i) Disease Control
- ii) Family Health Services
- iii) Environmental Health
- iv) Health Promotion and Prevention
- v) Medical Supplies Management and Distribution
- vi) Hospitals Clinical Services
- vii) Health Infrastructures.

Mr. Speaker, there are two district hospitals, 40 rural health centers and 187 aid posts across Bougainville. All health centers are open while only 83 aid posts are open. The other aid posts are closed due to remoteness, no proper road access, and no health care workers. The Technical Team is conducting assessment with the aim to open aid posts in strategic locations that have been closed and will rehabilitate and open them with funding allocated in the 2024 budget.

Mr. Speaker, the department structure was designed and implemented with a total of 1060 positions of which only 375 positions have been recruited and filled to date. The department could not recruit due to freeze on recruitment in 2019 by DPM, and no funding for DPMAS to recruit additional positions. In February 2024, the department submitted to DPMAS another list of 141 health workers who are working but are not on pay to engage them on short term contracts. This is an effort to fill the vacant positions and replace those that were retired and increase the health workforce of which 43 were retired in 2022 and 2023 affecting the total health workforce.

Mr. Speaker, since I was appointed 12 months ago, my priority is to improve access and delivery of health services to the rural population through the department network to health facilities. The ABG's Strategic Development Plan 2023-2027 has articulated in its social sector development plan – the need to improve basic health care indicators by increasing access to health care in rural areas. The department's 2024 implementation plan focuses on interventions that are aimed at addressing the following:

- Increasing immunization coverage
- Increasing facility births
- Increasing antenatal coverage
- Increasing access to and uptake of family planning
- Increasing percentage months with adequate medical supplies
- Improving access to basic primary health care
- Improving standard of health infrastructures
- Strengthen integrated outreach activities in rural areas

Mr. Speaker, in order to support the above initiatives, the department has developed a Health Strategic Plan (2023-2027) and Corporate Plan (2023-2025). The primary purpose of these plans is to provide a road map for the provision and further development of health services in the districts across Bougainville. The plans guide the department to work with the stakeholders to deliver essential health services across the region in line with the vision to strengthen primary health care for all.

Mr. Speaker, there is increasing demand for health services as the population increases. The latest estimates by the national statistics office indicates that the population of Bougainville has increased to 641,000 populations. This is having a negative impact on the level of services due to staff shortage as more health workers are retired and retrenched annually. The sector performance annual review

(SPAR) report of 2022 shows that the health worker to patient ration is 3:100. This means that there are only three (3) health workers available to serve 10,000 people in a given time per year. This is incredibly low and the department is pushing DPMAS to recruit more health workers.

Mr. Speaker, the health services infrastructure has deteriorated over the years through natural wear and tear, and it is our intention to bring it back to strength. We are rehabilitating and rebuilding our health facilities, so that all our population have access to health services. This rebuild focuses on rural health facilities, health training schools, hospital facilities in the three regions. My ministry and department focuses on increasing access and improve quality and this will be achieved through compliance and adherence to the National Health Service Standards (NHSS).

Mr. Speaker, the department received an additional of K5.3million in the development budget this year to cater for projects including procurement of medical supplies and rehabilitation of posts. The department is also prioritizing rehabilitation of existing health centers with unspent funds from 2023 budget. The department greatly appreciates the Executive Government for this additional funding allocation.

Mr. Speaker, delivery of health services is challenging as the department delivers various programs and projects with limited resources. These include public health programs, hospital services, infrastructure projects, and other cross-cutting programs.

Mr. Speaker, the department is delivering a non-communicable disease (NCD's) screening program. The department is implementing the 10,000 Toes screening program with fund support from Digicel Foundation. The World Health Organization (WHO) is providing technical support from the SDA Health Partner under the Bougainville Mission is implementing the screening program. The 10,000 Toes is a program that assesses and screen adults for risk factors for NCDs such as elevated blood pressure, elevated glucose, level, obesity, and refer those with risk factors for appropriate treatment. The program is currently implemented in North Nasioi and Rau Constituencies in Central Bougainville. The program will be expended to North and South Bougainville this year with the ABG funding allocation in the 2024 budget.

Mr. Speaker, the department is leading the implementation of environmental health and WASH Program. A WASH Policy and implementation Strategy has been developed by the department with technical support from European Union. The Strategy 2024 – 2028 will be implemented from March onwards for the next five years. This includes providing safe and clean water and sanitation to health facilities, schools, and communities across Bougainville. As part of these programs, a team of engineers and technical experts from water PNG visited AROB from 7th to the 11th of March and did feasibility assessment for Buka and Buin towns. The department is working with Technical Services to deliver other WASH projects in the local constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, my ministry and department is doing all we can to address the medical supplies issue. The supply of medicines has been problematic due to short supplies from the national department which procures medicines. The national department and national procurement commission does the procurement and distributes to the provinces who then distributes to the health facilities with support from local contractors. The department has budgeted for medical supplies and will commence procurement of medicines with the funding allocation of K3million in the 2024 budget.

Mr. Speaker, the child health immunization program is the heart of the health services which ensures that children are vaccinated and protected against infectious diseases such as severe forms of tuberculosis, polio, measles, hepatitis etc. In the health workers vaccinated over 70% of children under 5 years with external funding support from the PNG Partnership Fund (PPF). Data for 2023 are still being analyzed and the results will be available soon. The immunization program is being enhanced and the department has received additional funding from PPF for another 12 months for immunization which will end in March 2025.

Mr. Speaker, emergency management of obstetric care (EMOC) is another critical program intervention that my ministry and department is implementing. The program is targeted at supporting pregnant mothers to safely deliver their babies with minimum complications. The department initiated this critical program in 2022/2023 to train all health workers on how to manage obstetric emergencies. The program is supported by WHO, National Health Department, and funding support from ADB Health Sector Services Development Project (HSSDP). The WHO and HSSDP Team recently conduct EMOC Training for our health workers in the first week of March. We aim to reduce maternal deaths to 'zero' in the next 24 months.

Mr. Speaker, the hospital medical and clinical services is another critical component of healthcare. There has been a lot of critics towards our hospitals but the CEO's and their senior management teams are doing all they can to maintain the operations of the hospitals with limited resources. Buka operates on an annual budget of over K10million for operational expenditures and personal emoluments which is provided by the national government, while Arawa Hospital Budget is about K5million. However, they are allocated K300,000 each annually in the ABG Budget. While the funding allocation is insufficient to operate a hospital, they are still functional and the department is providing additional operational support from its allocation and from external funding. The department has allocated K20million to Buka hospital in North while we develop the referral hospital in Arawa.

Mr. Speaker, providing quality health services requires well maintained health infrastructures. My Ministry and department is doing all we can to improve the infrastructures to support delivery of health services. In 2023, the School of Nursing new building was completed and commissioned in December. The new Bolave Health Centre was also completed and opened in December 2023. Refurbishment and improvement of other health centres are being done with support from the Constituency Members in

consultation with the department and department of technical services. Other new district hospitals will soon be constructed with support from the development partners.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the department is working on a couple of policies. These include WASH Policy, Medical Drugs and Supplies Policy, Primary Health Care Promotion and Prevention Policy. The Health Secretary is currently in Singapore with other health professionals to meet with the Singapore Health Promotion Board to discuss how Health Promotion can be strengthened in PNG. The department is also working on the legislation to draw down the hospital powers and function, the procurement function, and will also review and amend the Bougainville Health Administration Act 2017.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Leader of Government Business.

Mr. THOMAS PATAAKU (LGOB) – I move that the House take note of the Statement by the Minister and that the statement can be debated. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - The Minister has moved a motion for the debate of the Statement by the Health Minister. The floor is open. Hon Member for Hagogohe

Debates on the Health Statement

Mr. ROBERT S HAMAL (Member Hagogohe) - Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to commend the Minister for his short and precise comprehensive report on the activities taken on board by your department. We have a lot of challenges, especially when it costs us money to bring about the services that will benefit our people. We have some very good infrastructure throughout the region, up in the mountains, but we continue to face problems with the supply of drugs. Sometimes, our workers in the health centers are not attentive 6 days a week when they should be working in the health centers. Our people continue to suffer between the valleys, mountains, and even on the East Coast where we continue to face a lot of problems. The problem with drug supplies is affecting all of us in the region. We have a powerful ABG delegation in Singapore to consult on procuring drugs from Singapore. It is important that we do this. Let me talk about the West Coast in Kunua and Mahari. I have been there and have seen that health services are not filtering through, especially into Saposa. They continue to face a lot of health problems, with pregnant mothers delivering babies on the boats. There are no aid posts in those areas and the people continue to suffer. We need to do something about this, Mr. Minister, with due respect to the Member for Mahari. We need to establish an aid post at Saposa island. It is highly populated, we've talked about it, and they want an aid post to be established there. This also includes going down to Kereaka, and the Member will agree, with the missing link, the people will continue to access some services. We all continue to face the same problems throughout the region with all the health care services. This is the same with Buka. As I have alluded in our Parliament sessions concerning my health

center right next to us. There are no medical drugs as well. The Doctor does not attend to the health center from 8 to 4 on a daily basis. This is unbecoming, and they had visitations from the health office, and no change has taken place. I would like the Minister to deal with my health center, a state-of-the-art hospital, and yet there is nothing happening in this health center. It is like a little Australia in itself. It was a center to be used during COVID-19, and I invited them to use my center. To date, officers went in and removed all the white goods. Why did they do that? The goods were never returned to the health center, and it is unbecoming, Mr. Minister. We were afraid of COVID-19, and the Member for Hagogohe took that risk with my people.

I need that hospital to be looked after, Minister. When you needed my help, I gave it to you. And now there is no attention given to that area. I want some doctors to be placed in this center to look after this hospital, and I am prepared to put up another staff house as the Member of Hagogohe Constituency. If I can deliver the stage to my Gogohe Parish last Sunday, I can do it. I would like an HEO for my hospital just like all the other centers in the region. We need to save lives because Bougainville is going toward being an independent nation. We need to look after this population. I commend you, Minister, despite the challenges we continue to face today; we continue to persevere through those challenges.

For the Buka Hospital, we want to establish an Intermediate Ward to look after the Members. Why go to the Philippines or Singapore to seek health treatment? Why don't we establish an intermediate ward to look after the Honourable Members here? Instead of spending money on the procurement of equipment, let's do it differently. It is not just because you have the luxury of funds and can fly out to receive special treatment. We all want to be specially treated, for that matter. Establish an Intermediate Ward, fix our scanning machines in the Hospital, surgery needs to be fixed, and the Outpatient department is overcrowded, so we need to make some extensions on that.

Let me say that the Member for North Bougainville has contributed K2.5 million to assist with our hospital, but that funding is not enough. I call on the Minister to establish the Intermediate Ward to be self-contained for the Members instead of going to Singapore because you have the funds. Our civilians can also access this facility with equipment coming in. Let us all work together to help our hospital here in Arawa to bring about these services. We are all aging, and that Intermediate Ward will serve you with all the pressures we face today.

To the Minister for Health, I am with you in going into partnership to improve our health facilities. We need to save lives in Bougainville. While the Member for Central is also here, thank you so much for attending our session, Hon Dumarinu. I was expecting our other colleagues to be here as well, but I am happy you are here. I would very much like us to work with the National MPs to improve our health facilities.

To all our health facilities in all the Regions—North, Central, and South—let us all look after these facilities so that we can put in medical drugs to help ourselves, so that we can rise and shine and declare Bougainville an independent nation. These are part and parcel of the activities in declaring our constituencies independent and ready.

With this, thank you so much, Mr. Minister, for your comprehensive presentation today, informing the Honourable House on the activities taken by your Ministry and Department. Thank you

Mr. SPEAKER - The Hon Member for Mahari

Ms. CAROLYNE POLI (Member Mahari) – Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to contribute to the statement by the Health Minister. Thank you, and I commend the timely statement and update presented on the floor of this Parliament. I also want to thank the Member for Hagogohe for raising the concern that affects my Constituency, which I cannot deny. It is true that it is a real struggle.

Mr. Speaker, my contribution will be based on the statistics presented in the statement, especially on the aid posts around Bougainville. It is a concern here, especially when there are 183 aid posts across Bougainville and only 83 are open. I will emphasize this based on where my constituency stands with this health service. Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that I have been closely talking to the Health Department Secretary, expressing my plans for health services in my constituency. Thank you, Minister, for bringing this up.

I would rather emphasize prioritizing the aid posts, especially since they serve the population. We can have referral hospitals or health centers, but I still see the importance of prioritizing the aid posts. At this time, Mahari has the Hahon aid post of which only one is open. Looking at the distance, it is very hard to get there. I cannot express enough the hardships faced because it is just beyond our imagination, especially in the way we treat the people. But what I will ask is to prioritize the aid posts. The difference of 183 is still 100 plus, and I ask that we locate them. Where are they, Mr. Speaker, and get them back into operation? If they have a closed status, please let them come back because that is where the people are.

In terms of drugs, yes, there is a shortage of them now. While we are waiting, through you, Mr. Speaker, for the delegation that is outside to come back with some promising assistance, what we can do right now – and I am speaking from where I stand as the Member for Mahari where the people are – I have actually asked if there could be a mobile clinic kind of service done, to go around where the people are in their wards and provide this mobile clinic for the people. That would really help because right now, Mr. Speaker, the aid posts are closed. There are no medical drugs there, and to get them to the nearest hospital is very costly. That is the point I would like to bring forward for consideration, Mr. Minister, through you and your good Secretary and your department. Otherwise, we will work closely together,

and in my K1 million allocation, I have planned for co-funding with your department Ministry to open health services in the Mahari Constituency for my people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Member for Haku and I will come to the other two members.

Mr. PATRICK KOLES (Member Haku) – Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for Health for his presentation. I am happy as I have dealt with the Minister several times on the various problems faced in Haku Constituency, but I want to talk on behalf of what I see in the other areas. I will start off with the aid posts.

In Haku, there are two aid posts and one health centre with a population of 25,000. I think that indicated by the population, the Health Department must look more into establishing more aid posts, and we have addressed that in our five-year development plan. In fact, I have met with him several times with the Secretary regarding these issues. In terms of the aid posts, there are no proper sections for the mothers to properly deliver their babies. These are not our dogs and pigs. In the aid post, particularly in the most remote areas, they need some room where they can rest after giving birth and then later leave. I also went to the Technical Services to scope some extensions to be included – the birthing areas for the pregnant mothers. I think this is important, including a proper lighting system. This is about the aid posts. Maybe a proper survey be done everywhere on the aid posts, the health centres, now that we know some funding has become available. We need to look into these, and when improvements are done, it also creates a good working environment for the health workers to feel secure and happy to be there and not unwanted where it is most remote.

Concerning Buka Town Clinic. I go there almost every week to visit patients, and you will notice the screen wires, ply wires are so filthy. Instead of creating an attractive environment where the sick patient will go and sleep, he or she does not need to sleep in such environments. It requires drastic and good maintenance, and if you compare that with Arawa Hospital, I'd rather be in Arawa than here in Buka. Buka is currently a referral Hospital, and it must be sorted out otherwise. It is important. Regarding drugs being sold on the streets; last week I bought a paracetamol box and incidentally, my daughter who is a trained nurse, was so surprised to see me with this box. She immediately commented that, that is the box which was on social media that it is a counterfeit medicine. Are you actually monitoring and regulating people that are selling these on the streets and above all else too, some stores in the villages are selling drugs? For example, a paracetamol tablet is K1. Can our people afford K1, and is this a full dose? Are they qualified to sell these drugs? Is this being regulated or not? I think we need to regulate these, and only people that go for training can be licensed.

There are shops also selling these paracetamols. I have fear for they may kill us. This is the same with sterilized water. During the crisis, they boiled the water and they almost killed some people. But these are some of the considerations that are important, and I would like us to conduct a proper survey and come up with, in particular, the rural and most remote areas, to have some more aid posts. This is

because increases in aid posts will be determined by population increase. Because the population is the major key planning indicator in terms of planning regardless of Department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER – Member for Baba

Mr. EMMANUEL KAETAVARA (Member Baba) – Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make some observations based on the statement that was presented by the Minister. Firstly, I acknowledge the spouses who are here for their program and at the same time, acknowledge the National Member that is sitting on the floor. I'd also like to observe that he is the only member who, since being elected, has never missed a sitting. I think this is something that the National Members should consider. This is where they get views from the constituencies in terms of our priorities that should be set. I thank the Minister for Health for his statement. He has presented some very critical statistics that need to be considered in terms of how we plan for future budgeting, especially in supporting the health sector.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of how we operate and in terms of service delivery, the sectoral management falls under our Ministers. When the sectors are not operating well, many times the constituency members are faced with this problem. When the custodians of those particular sectors are not progressing with the department with service delivery—because service delivery, in my view, falls under Executive responsibility—I think, in particular in the Health Sector, when things don't work, and I thank the good Minister for the data and statistics that have been presented, it shows us the big problem we have in the health sector. This really needs to be considered.

Based on this, I want to make some additional observations. Mr. Speaker, if you recall, there was a strong statement on the floor, and I was one of the leaders who repeatedly emphasized this, unfortunately, due to the personal experience I had in losing my spouse as well. I have experienced first-hand the challenges in the health sector and want to make some observations based on the statement. Again, I thank the Secretary of the department. Despite the challenges that they have faced throughout, and almost the entire House, they continued to stand and work in moving the process in the health sector. There has been a lot of politics in the health sector, and this really hindered a lot of progress within the health sector. The level of politics significantly affected the service delivery in Bougainville, and finally, we have seen some conclusion to the political and administrative battles that disturbed a lot of work.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of a couple of points I want to raise, first is when we continue to focus on building large structures. I note in North West that a big hospital will be built, including in Arawa. There are plans to build a big hospital in South Bougainville as well, and all these infrastructures have their funding that has already come in. I also acknowledge the Development partners who have provided a lot of support for Bougainville in the health sector. Apart from these infrastructures, I want to reiterate and echo the statement by the former minister and Member for Hagogohe on the Intermediate Ward.

I'd like to go a step further, Mr. Speaker, and suggest that we need to establish a specialist facility in Bougainville. We are establishing many hospitals; why can't we establish one facility that will accommodate specialists in this one facility? Our population has surpassed the half-million mark, and I believe Bougainville, in terms of health, has seen many newly introduced diseases, many lifestyle diseases, but I think we are not at the level where one specialist facility cannot help us. We have spent a lot of money sending people to Australia, the Philippines, over the term of this House. This one specialist facility, with the relevant specialists, can provide advice, and we can stop sending people outside. This will also address many problems in terms of government expenditure, particularly focusing on the leaders. I think it is also part of protocol to observe and send leaders to receive specialist treatment, but I think we serve the people, and they also expect to receive the same kind of service.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we can see problems with the statistics; we have sat on the floor several times over the past years, and if we give the kind of support required to the health sector, one good practice in the government when we pass the budget is to allocate at least a minimum of 10% of the budget for the health sector. This is a standard across the world in terms of good budgeting practice. This House has missed this target. The health sector has received less than 10% of the budget for its support. I think we need to look into this.

I want to reflect on the comments that came out from the Minister for Independence, particularly the Independence Ready Mission, where we stated that each of the departments must also be ready for independence. Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect on this and say that within the health sector, we need to establish a vision for the health sector to move forward. What do we envision the health sector to look like beyond independence? This is very important, and it will help us to plan in terms of the budget level on what we really need to prioritize in developing the health sector that would properly and efficiently serve the future of Bougainville. An educated and healthy society is a good sign for Bougainville as we go into independence. If we are educated but not healthy, it is a problem, and if we are healthy but uneducated, that is also a problem.

Mr. Speaker, the fourth point I want to share in terms of challenges is on referral pathways. I want to reflect and echo the views of the Member for Mahari. Improving our rural health is very important. We need to ensure all our aid posts are up and running, and this will ensure that the many problems we face are addressed before they reach complicated stages for our people. If we improve our rural health, we will not need to build big infrastructures (hospitals) because we would have addressed those problems at an early stage. Rural health is important, and I can recall before the pre-crisis days when I was a small kid, health workers would patrol our villages. They would travel with kits and engage with the community. As part of health awareness, they also discussed other things such as living standards as part of our health.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose this as a question. Last year, the Minister mentioned K1 million for infrastructure funding under infrastructure improvement, and some constituencies had hoped that we would get support to maintain some of these infrastructures. Could the Minister clarify if this fund has been exhausted or if it is still available?

Reflecting on staffing across the region, this is a big problem. Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to a couple of people, very reliable people within the health sector, and the issue of staffing is a big concern. I refer to the point raised by the Minister regarding the freeze on recruitment, which is a significant issue. I also note that many of the Health Extension Officers (HEOs), who are clinicians and should be in the field, are sitting in the administration offices handling paperwork when they should be out in the field. If these people are in the offices, who are the clinicians running these hospitals? The staffing problem also involves how we prioritize and place our staff in the hospitals. We need to consider those individuals sitting in the office; if they are HEOs, we need to get them back into the field. They are supposed to work between the nurses and the doctors and provide this service.

Mr. Speaker, another point I want to discuss is the interrelated infrastructure. I want to reflect on a report we presented during the Disaster and there was a recommendation made regarding one particular instance where we touched on an infrastructure that is important because it is interconnected to services. In health, one vital and interconnected infrastructure is the road. I raised this question earlier because some constituencies have still not seen upgrades and repairs to the roads. I consulted with the Minister, and some of the funds under infrastructure are under the District Services Improvement Program (DSIP), and the national members insist that their District Development Authorities (DDAs) must put out tenders for these projects. I do not want to focus on North and Central, but particularly on South Bougainville. This is a significant issue because if we want to have, and I refer to the comments by the Member for Mahari on the mobile clinics, there are proposals by investors who want to come in and support ABG with large vehicles which cannot run on our current roads. We need those roads improved to have access to these assets. At the same time, our people in the Atolls need sea ambulances, and we need to carefully consider how we interrelate and connect with the infrastructures that we develop.

Interjection by the Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Member, I will give you one minute to finish your statement.

Mr. EMMANUEL KAETAVARA – Thank you. I'll try to finish as fast as I can within 60 seconds. In terms of consultation on infrastructure development, Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect before I take my chair that the health sector is not an issue that belongs entirely to the National Government and ABG. I think we have a big problem of no coordination between the national government and ABG. The National Government also has political projects that are not being consulted through the relevant department. We have hospitals where the political leaders of the South have built, and a lot of these

buildings and infrastructure are not up to the standards required in the health sector. They have put equipment there which is not relevant and cannot be installed in those particular infrastructures.

Mr. Speaker, because health is our responsibility, I want to make this call to work together to improve our health sector. It is everybody's business, and we need a unified approach when we work to improve our health sector. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SIMON DUMARINU (Nat Member Central) – Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me time as I want to also contribute to the important work of health in our region. As the member for Central Bougainville and as the Chairman of the DDA and also of the Parliamentary Committee on Health in PNG, I thank the Minister for presenting this statement. As the Member for Central Bougainville, I fully support the Health Minister, including all the other ABG Ministers in whatever area they look after in their ministry. I look forward to working with the Ministers, the Members in Central Bougainville, and the ABG together with the staff – Public Servants. Let us continue to work together.

In the areas of Health, I look forward to working with you in areas that need to be developed, particularly in Central Bougainville. I think that has already been highlighted in many ways, and an ambulance has been acquired already for Central Bougainville and is at the Arawa Hospital. This is the assistance given by DDA, and we are also assisting in educating our Doctors to acquire their Master's level so that they are knowledgeable and come back and serve our people in our hospitals. We must continue to support our youths to Nursing Schools, and I will support you as the Minister and the other Ministers and Members of ABG, especially Central, in my term as the Member representing Central Bougainville. Some equipment has been procured for Central, and an establishment of a school – a clinic centre for Ioro which is in place already and this compliments your work in ABG as our government on the ground. My task is to compliment you in areas, especially in the hospital, which is very important.

I am happy to work with you as the Member for Central Bougainville. It is important for the members of the National Parliament that we must not create competition but to compliment what ABG is working on so that we are moving Bougainville together towards one common purpose in preparing the people on the 97.7% to become a reality.

I congratulate the Health Minister and the department and as a Committee in the National Parliament Health Committee, I am happy with your report in terms of Malaria in Bougainville. You have done well throughout PNG. You have this important record. I thank the Health Minister, the Secretary, and the staff of the Health department for this report. Once again, I do not have an opposition but to compliment every minister, particularly the health minister and the ABG Members; that we achieve a common purpose in our journey. With this, thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Member for Atolls.

Mr. TAEHU PAIS (Member Atolls) – Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to support the statement by the Minister and I have made some observations which I want to add on to. Many good comments have already been made. I just want to say that there is public sale of drugs on the street. Are these sellers licensed to do that? Are they selling good drugs or is it something that we need to investigate? This is one area that I want to highlight because as you walk the street, you see them standing with Panadol or amoxicillin, drugs that should be prescribed by the doctors in the hospital. But you see these sellers selling these drugs on the street. How legal are they in doing what they are doing? I would like my good Minister to take note of this, as health is very important for all of us as we walk towards independence. I would like us to be a healthy population and we need to look into this, Mr. Minister, for your further action.

Secondly, in terms of environmental health, I want to add that it is up to us to look after our health. Many of the youths of today, whom we believe should be the future generation that will look after the independence that we work hard for, are drinking their lives away. Homebrew is illegal, but why is it being allowed to be sold on the streets or manufactured by our youths today? Maybe the important key factor is giving out the awareness, as mentioned by our brother, to educate our future generation.

Otherwise, I support this presentation as I know the problems the nation of PNG and Bougainville is going through in terms of the shortage of drugs. At least we continue to try and get some supplies.

I want to say thank you to the previous doctors, and as I speak, we have one doctor who was with us from the crisis and is now on medical grounds seeking health assistance. He is Dr. Vilosi, and during those dark days, it was Dr. Vilosi who looked after the hospital and also ran the medical clinic. He looked after the whole of Bougainville, including Arawa. We are raising funds to assist him in seeking medical assistance overseas if we can. Let us all put our hands together and assist him in return.

Once again, thank you, Minister, for your statement. I want to acknowledge the member for Central Bougainville – National MP who is with us today. This is the only member who has been with us since elected and has been attending to our sittings.

I thank all the spouses for attending, and you know I am your supporter. You must know that you have supporters as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Mr. SPEAKER – Member for South Nasioi

Mr. JUSTIN BORGIA (Member South Nasioi) – Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to contribute to the statement by the Health Minister regarding the shortcomings in your Ministry, but you are still trying your best. First of all, I acknowledge the spouses who are here to witness the Parliament and the National Member for Central. Minister, you presented a good report, and I would like to make some

comments. One of the issues is the shortage of drugs. Drugs are one issue that is affecting all the facilities in the region. We have Health Clinics such as at Hagogohe, including mine, that do not have drugs. This is one issue that is challenging us and implicates funding. Where will funds come from, and we have to be smart in acquiring the right drugs to treat our people.

On top of the comments made by the previous speakers, we need to focus on prevention. The Health Department must have plans to prevent diseases. As mentioned by the leaders, before the crisis, there were awareness teams such as the Malaria team that would go around the villages and spray them with malarial medicines. Dentists would visit the schools, and I believe we should have a preventative approach across the region. In schools at an early stage, we educate them on lifestyle diseases and how they can understand health to live healthy lives. We see our youths drinking homebrew at a very tender age, boys and girls drinking at Primary Schools, and already looking much older than some of us.

We must have awareness programs, and the Health Department can plan for the future to safeguard this population. A youth productive population is crucial for the work of this young nation. If not, we will have a sick population with diseases like diabetes, and how is this nation going to be managed? Awareness and access to drugs are crucial.

Currently, we have problems in Arawa Town with contaminated water with metal, which is being used and is unhealthy. Many skin diseases are being experienced, and the Health Department conducted a study, which is available and needs intervention to stop this. This issue is related to alluvial gold, and many water creeks in Bougainville have been damaged by this activity. We have encouraged alluvial activity, but there is no control in managing the environment. This is a significant issue, and without safe drinking water, many skin diseases are being experienced, posing a challenge for us to contain.

In terms of WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), we need awareness. Rivers are damaged as they are not being used properly. There are no proper toilet systems. It is about time that we have proper toilet systems, septic tanks in our homes. This is part of the awareness campaign, and we must preserve our nice beaches and rivers.

In my Constituency, the Health Department conducted a study on WASH, and this is the same with all the other constituencies as well. This contributes to the problem of skin diseases.

Another issue is that we need to look after our doctors. Arawa Health Centre does not have a doctor. We must take care of the doctors that are here, ensuring they are compensated properly. We had a very good Doctor, Dr. Hasola, who left us for Port Moresby. If we can attract the best medical professionals, this is an investment, and we can benefit from people seeking services in Bougainville. We can have good doctors, but we need to meet their conditions, which is something we need to address. It is about

retaining good medical personnel so that when we fall sick, we have qualified doctors to seek medical help from.

We must also maintain the equipment at Buka Hospital, such as the scanner that is not functioning well. These are million-kina equipment that needs to be fixed and operated by the right people. There are steps we can take to provide the services here with the right personnel operating them.

The issues with WASH are significant as I have been visiting the constituencies and noticing this. It is not good when we have visitors in the communities, and there are no health facilities or proper toilet facilities for them to use. This is quite embarrassing, so the Health Department must have a master plan for the future and give awareness to the schools so that they understand how to look after themselves and become healthy people.

Fake drugs entering the market must be addressed. There was a committee that worked on the issue of fake medical drugs, and I am pleased to see the Police addressing street sellers of illegal drugs. We must encourage more of that. With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER – I will call on the last speaker on this statement and will give time to another Minister to deliver his statement. Member for Konnou.

Mr. WILLIE MASIU (Member Konnou) – Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to represent my people of Konnou Constituency and to take part in the debate on this comprehensive statement with data and statistics presented by the Minister for Health.

Whilst I appreciate this statement, I have a concern regarding the aid posts. In support of the comments by the Member for Mahari and Baba, I also see aid posts as very important because they cater to the people in the villages. Seeing the statistics in the report, there are 187 aid posts in Bougainville on paper, but in reality, only 83 are in operation. This means that 104 aid posts listed on paper in the Health Department are not operating. I have a question about these 104 aid posts that are not operational. How are they included in the health statistics if they are not operating? What is the reason for their non-operation?

Mr. Minister, you should work towards getting these 104 aid posts operational again. I urge you to provide a list of these aid posts so that we can see which ones are open. Aid posts in my constituency may be listed but not operational. If they are not operational, it is my duty as the Constituency Member to find out why they are not operating. This data should be provided to all of us so that we can identify those that are not functioning.

I would like to have many aid posts in my constituency. Some may be present but not operational, and we need to find ways to get them running again.

Lastly, Mr. Minister, I am still concerned about the nursing officers who graduated from the Bougainville Nursing College in 2018 and are still not on the payroll. I believe you also mentioned this in your statement. You mentioned that you would like more staff, but due to funding constraints, you are not able to recruit more. However, they need to be paid as nothing is free nowadays. There is no such thing as a free lunch anymore. Please ensure they receive their fortnight wages as they have been working for a long time now.

Those of us who have children and are still not paid are growing tired of their requests, but we still need to assist them. Therefore, pay them their wages as they deserve it. Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER - Hon Members, the question is that the Statement by the Minister for Health be noted. Those in favor say aye and those against say no. The Ayes have it. Minister for Police

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT – POLICE

Hon John Bosco Ragu

Thank You Mr. Speaker for giving me time to present my Statement but before that, let me congratulate the member for South Bougainville Former Combatants as I was not available last year to congratulate you. I also acknowledge the spouses who are with us today and the Member for Central – National Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, thank you so much once again for giving me this opportunity to update this Honourable House on what has transpired in the Bougainville Police Service in the last three (3) months, from December 2023 to March 2024.

Firstly, let me inform this House once again that the challenges facing the Bougainville Police Service are real. Real in the sense that police personnel, from ranks to files, are facing accommodation problems, logistical issues such as fuel shortages, malfunctioning computers and printers, lack of vehicle maintenance, and the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, the Bougainville Police Service continues to face challenges as long as we inadequately support it with funds. The Bougainville Police is a government department that should be equally funded by both the National Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government.

Mr. Speaker, the National Government gives the Bougainville Police Service a mere less than one hundred thousand kinas annually. What can we do with this lousy sum given the huge demand from a government sector that is required to perform its constitutional mandate on a 24/7 basis or in daily operations to ensure the safety and security of the entire nation and its people?

Mr. Speaker, despite the national government's lack of support for the BPS, I want to commend the Toroama/Nisira Government for its oversight in ensuring that the Bougainville Police gets at least some allocation through the ABG's annual budget. The Toroama/Nisira Government sees the importance of rebuilding the Police Stations and Police Posts in the region since these infrastructures were completely destroyed during the height of the Bougainville Conflict. The re-establishment of these law enforcement infrastructures is part of the BPS Independence Readiness.

At this juncture, Mr. Speaker, let me inform this House that the Bana Police Station is almost complete, while the Kieta Police Station is progressing, but at a slow pace. There are some construction issues encountered by the contractors; however, these are manageable with effective management.

Mr. Speaker, the Technical Services Department has advised that tenders are now open for contractors who would like to bid for the following Police Posts.

They are: -

- 1 Konga Police Post – Siwai District
- 2 Panguna Police Post – Central, at Camp 5 and will become a Patrol Post
- 3 Suir Police Post – North and
- 4 Siara High Way Patrol Post – North (I am still waiting for the Selau Member for the handover of land for work to progress. Kunua Police Station is not listed down

Mr. Speaker, our next target for Police Stations and Posts are:

- 1 Buin Town
- 2 Lenoke Police Post (ground breaking was done last year) Thank you Member for Lule
- 3 Makis Police Post
- 4 And Nissan Police Station

Mr. Speaker, this will require our next submission to the Bougainville Executive Council for consideration and approval of the required budget to be able to build these Police Posts. I also encourage respective constituency members to take ownership of these projects for the sake of law and order, peace, and security in our communities. These are reflections of our BPS commitment toward independence preparedness.

As I always say that if you want to give land, the people, Community Government, the Member must all agree and let me know so that I and the Chief of Police can come to witness. This must not be disputed later on.

Mr. Speaker, one of our other major challenges is also the lack of manpower. Recruitment and training have been the responsibility of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. Recruitment and training have been a setback simply because the RPNGC has not been focusing much on Bougainville in terms of boosting our strength and manpower through recruitment and training. This is an area that BPS is now seriously considering and will soon make a submission to the Bougainville Executive Council for endorsement. This will include Reserve Police Recruitment.

The trip I took to Port Moresby was to also speak to the Commissioner to give approval for training to be done in our region. But we do not have the facilities and it will cost a lot of money. We will need to have funds to run this training. 180 personnel from last is still on hold due to this. My trip must be successful so that we train these 180 personnel.

Mr. Speaker, let me inform this House that law and order situations throughout the three regions of South, Central, and North have been generally normal, however, very few recorded major incidents have occurred over the last three months. Such as the Boat mishap in the premise of Buka Passage where an alleged passenger of an outboard motor accidentally fell into the sea and the body was never retrieved. Another boat mishap containing Bougainvilleans, mostly from Buka District, resulted in the six survivors out of the initial eight (8) passengers including the skipper who were rescued by a Chinese Fishing Vessel and were taken to Kiribati. The alleged six (6) survivors have been processed by the Kiribati authorities in consultation between the Autonomous Bougainville Government and the National Government of PNG for their safe return to Bougainville.

Mr. Speaker, the Konnou Issue is still an outstanding issue for the ABG and all local leaders to resolve. Recently, a father and son fell victim to unknown gunmen who, at close range, shot dead the father while the son was taken to the Buka Hospital and died some weeks later. The situation in Konnou is quite complex, and given that kind of complexity, Police are not able to access the hotspot areas and establish Policing work. While talking about Konnou, I would like to encourage the so-called Parliamentary Committee, which was established to deal with and inquire into such cases as Konnou Conflict, to be able to consider Konnou as one of its agendas. Konnou Conflict is Bougainville's conflict that requires every concerned citizen or peace stakeholder and all levels of government leadership to have an interest and find amicable solutions.

Mr. Speaker, illicit drugs and homebrew are two well-known substances that are major causes of some social disorders in our communities. While policemen and women are trying their best to crack down

on these illegal substances, every parent, every leadership, particularly at the ward and community government, must take responsibility to be able to minimize or rather completely stop these illegal activities of illicit drugs and homebrew. I recently spoke to our Liaison Officer that there will be information given out to the public that we are still under the PNG law. These guns and drugs are illegal. Most of these cases are within the Bougainville Police Services' jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, much has been levelled against the National Government, especially for its lack of support in terms of funds, logistics, and capacity building. Here, I am happy to inform this House that the RPNGC has approved and purchased 12 new Police vehicles for the Bougainville Police Service. Six vehicles have already arrived, and the other six are still yet to be shifted to Buka. I am grateful for the long-overdue assistance from the RPNGC and, in particular, want to acknowledge and thank Commissioner David Manning for these vehicles. These vehicles will relieve the much talked-about run-down fleet of vehicles in the Bougainville Police Service. 3 vehicles each will be given to each region and so we need to look after thee region.

Mr. Speaker, regarding the appointment of the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) and the Deputy Chief of Police in the Bougainville Police Service, Anthony Wagambie Jnr by Commissioner Manning, I also want to make it clear here that I stand behind the statement made by Honourable President Ishmael Toroama and our Attorney General, Hon Ezekiel Masatt. I do concur with the call that the appointment is not recognized by the ABG because it is unconstitutional and breaches the Bougainville Peace Agreement. The Bougainville Peace Agreement clearly stipulates that the appointment of hierarchical officers in the Bougainville Police Service by the Commissioner of Police must be based on the direct nomination of a suitable candidate by the ABG through the Bougainville Executive Council.

Mr. Speaker, the Bougainville Executive Council met last week, and through my policy submission, has completely rejected the appointment of Anthony Wagambie Jnr. I believe this matter will be resolved by the Commissioner of Police in re-establishing consultation between the President following due process of appointing hierarchical officers of the Bougainville Police Service as stipulated by the Bougainville Peace Agreement, Section 237, and Section 26 of the Organic Law on Peace Building on Bougainville.

Before I conclude my statement, I want to send a message to all the stakeholders, families, Ward Members, chairladies, chairmen's, chiefs, churches to assist in strengthening the rule of law in the region. We must not depend on the Police to come to your doorstep to avoid disturbance to your family etc and the community. We need to hold hands together and uphold the rule of law, talk to the law breakers and get ready for independence. If there are major issues, to report directly to the Police Station, have it registered and the Police will attend to it.

Mr. Speaker, to conclude, let me also inform this Honourable House that I am happy the Bougainville Executive Council had extended the appointment of Mr. Francis Tokura as Deputy Commissioner and Chief of Bougainville Police for another three months. At this juncture, I want to congratulate Mr. Tokura for the appointment and pledge to continue working together with him for the sake of the Bougainville Police Service.

I commend this statement to the floor of this Honourable House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT – DEPUTY SPEAKER

Hon Therese Kaetavara

Mr. Speaker,

Let me join you in acknowledging the presence of the Parliamentary spouses in the public gallery of this Honorable House.

Thank you Honorable Members for bringing your spouse which makes it possible for me to finally launch the Parliamentarians Spouses Program at midday tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker,

The purpose of my statement is to update the Members of the House on my engagements as the Deputy Speaker on Inter Parliamentary Relations events in 2023.

I will also take this opportunity to brief the House on a recent program attended by the women members of the House of Representatives in Auckland, New Zealand in February 2024.

Mr. Speaker,

Much has been said or mentioned about the three prongs approach in executing the Bougainville Independence Mission Readiness Resolution passed by the House. I am making reference to the Regional, National and International executions of activities in preparations for Bougainville's Independence.

Let me thank the President, Honorable Ishmael Toroama and the Attorney General and Minister for Independence Ready Affairs, Hon. Ezekiel Ma sat t for keeping this House informed on the Executive Government' s mission to protect 97.7% vote on independence for Bougainville.

Mr. Speaker,

The Clerk of Parliament Mr. Robert Tapi , Inter Parliamentary Relations Officer , Thomas lobo accompanied me, to represent the Bougainville House of Representatives in the 52nd Presiding Officers and Clerks' Conference, hosted by the National Parliament of Solomon Islands in Honiara from the 2nd to the 6th of July 2023.

This is an annual parliamentary event which brings together Speakers and Clerks of Parliaments from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Region to share experiences encountered their respective jurisdictions when dealing with political, social and economic developments in their countries .

I am happy to inform this House that the post referendum consultations between the Autonomous Bougainville Government and the National Government was highlighted by the Clerk of the National Parliament, Mr. Kala Aufa in his presentation on the Parliamentary Partnership Agreement between the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives in the Conference.

The House of Representatives Jurisdiction Report also captured an update on the political consultation, and the roles played by the House of Representatives in upholding good governance and sustaining peace through its oversight and scrutiny functions .

Mr. Speaker,

The Report on the 52nd Presiding Officers and Clerks' Conference is available as information for the Members of the House on the BHOR website.

Mr. Speaker,

In August 2023, I also led a delegation of Bougainville women parliamentarians, which included the Member for Mahari Constituency, Hon. Carolyn Pal i, Regional Women Representative for North Bougainville and Minister for Public Service, Honorable Amanda Getsi Masono, Regional Women Representative for Central Bougainville and Minister for Primary Industry, Hon Geraldine Paul land Member for Toro. to join female Members of Parliaments from twelve (12) Pacific Parliaments which came together in Wellington, New Zealand, for a three day gathering packed with learning, networking and professional development.

Thirty five (35) women parliamentarians from the nations of the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea (including the Autonomous Region of Bougainville) , Vanuatu, Kiribati, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Cook Islands, as well as the realm nation of Tokelau and the special collectivity of New Caledonia attended Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians program.

During the two days Members of Parliament attended a number of workshop sessions and presentations focused on

areas such as engagements, personal strategy, political skills, news and social media, as well as other facets of being a parliamentarian in the Pacific.

Also in the busy program, was a schedule vote to decide the new Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Chair and Co-Chair of the Pacific Branch. Fiji s MP Lenora Qereqeretabua was

elected as chair while Member of Parliament from Vanuatu Gloria Julia King received the Deputy chair role. King is the only female Member of Parliament in Vanuatu.

Mr. Speaker,

The Bougainville Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association once held the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Chairpersons position when the former Regional Women Representative for North Bougainville Region, Elizabeth Burain was elected the Chair of CWP Pacific Region.

On this note, let me thank the New Zealand Parliament for its continued support to women Parliamentarians in the Pacific Region through the Tai a Kiwa funding assistance program.

Mr. Speaker,

In July 2022, a Delegation from the Parliament of New South Wales visited the House of Representatives. With the concurrence of the Members of the House, the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Hon. Leslie Williams addressed this House and reaffirmed the partnership between our parliaments.

The Parliament of New South Wales is twinned with the National Parliament of Solomon Islands and the Bougainville House of Representatives. We have benefitted from the fourteen (14) year old friendship through staff exchange, parliamentary visits and equipment supply funded through the Pacific Parliamentary Partnership Fund.

Mr. Speaker,

I led a delegation for a reciprocal visit to the Parliament of New South Wales in October 2023. The Bougainville Delegation included; myself, Minister for Finance and Treasury, Hon. Robin Wilson, and Deputy Clerk Peter Topura, and the then Director, Corporate Services, Ignatius Hamal.

A delegation from the Solomon Islands Parliament also visited the Parliament of New South Wales during the same period. This is part of an ongoing twinning between the legislatures.

A Report on the visit to the Parliament of New South Wales will be made available as information for the Members of the House on the BHOR website.

Mr. Speaker,

I am also happy to provide an update on this year's engagement by the five women Parliamentarians from the Bougainville House of Representatives in Auckland, New Zealand from the 21st to the 23rd of February 2024.

The 2024 Pacific Women in Power Forum was attended by Women Leaders from 11 Pacific Parliaments.

The three—day forum supported by the people of New Zealand, Australia and Japan— sees women members of parliaments as well as parliamentary officials coming together to discuss opportunities for empowering women's representation, approaches to improving inclusivity and the effectiveness of parliamentarians in tackling gender inequality.

The Forum noted that fewer than 7% of Pacific politicians are women, compared with 27% globally.

However, there are bright spots across the Pacific. In Nauru, two of the 19 seats in parliament are held by women, and in the Republic of the Marshall Islands Hilda Heine was sworn in this year as the President.

In Vanuatu, Gloria Julia King became the country's first woman elected to parliament in almost 14 years, and in Papua New Guinea Francesca Semoso joined Rufina Peter and Kessy Sawang bolstering women's representation to the highest levels in the Pacific Region since 2012.

Mr. Speaker,

In my address to the Forum, I said, that to effectively represent its people, the composition of a parliament must reflect the population it serves.

“Under representation is not a mere statistic, it is a reality’. We must appreciate each other as women leaders and learn from our unique and vast experiences. Only then can we collectively change the statistic on women in position of leadership. That is the statement that I delivered in the Forum.

Mr. Speaker,

Let me thank the people of Bougainville for the trust and confidence they have on women in position of leadership by electing the five women parliamentarians to equally perform the duties and responsibilities of elected Members in the Bougainville House of Representatives.

I commend this statement to the House.

Mr. SPEAKER - Clerk? Leader of Government Business?

Mr. THOMAS PATAAKU (LOGB) – thank you Mr. Speaker. I move that the House take note of the Statement by the Deputy Speaker and that debate on the Statement can take place later on.

Mr. SPEAKER - Hon Members, the question is that the statement by the Deputy Speaker be taken note of and that debate on it be put to a later time, those in favour say aye, and those against? The ayes have it.

Leader of Government Business.

Mr. THOMAS PATAAKU – Thank you Mr. Speaker. I now move that the House adjourn to tomorrow 20th March at 10.00 am.

Motion to Adjourn House

Mr. SPEAKER - Honorable Members, before I adjourn the House, I want to thank all the spouses who are here to observe our session. It is quite tiring sitting at the back, but I think they have been very patient listening to us. Tomorrow, there will be a briefing for them at lunchtime by the Parliamentary Service and myself. I adjourn to tomorrow.

The other matter I want to inform the House about is that for every set of meeting dates that are fixed, as the Speaker, I send messages, texts, and sometimes call the four Members, and they are aware of these meetings. I just want to say that to the House. Yes, they are always informed of the meeting dates for the House. We will continue to do that.

With this, we will now stand and adjourn. Honorable Members, the question is, "Should this House be adjourned?" Those in favor, say aye, and those against, say no. The ayes have it.

This House is adjourned to 10 a.m. tomorrow.

DRY