



22 men being escorted out of Jackson's Domestic Terminal after their arrival from Wewak on Sunday morning. Picture by STEVEN UMARU

O'Neill fires broadside at Government

FORMER Prime Minister and Ialibu-Pangia MP Peter O'Neill has lashed out at the Government over the rising cost of fuel in the country affecting many Papua New Guineans.

"The rising cost of fuel is leading many to go hungry in PNG and the Government needs to stop sitting on its hands and act," he said.

"People in island communities rely on outboard motor fuel, Zoom, to travel further afield to fish to feed their families and earn a living."

"On Karkar Island, where fishing is the main source of protein, Zoom is expensive at over K6 per litre.

"The high price means only fishing grounds close to shore are fished and the normal outer reef fishing has slowed significantly or stopped. This is leading to genuine food shortages and reports of starvation are rife."

The burden on our mothers and forests is also increasing across the country with firewood increasingly being used as fuel for cooking due to the very high cost of kerosene.

"What are our mothers to do except collect firewood if the price of kero is out of their reach?" said the former Prime Minister.

"We are a nation that protects our environment, but you cannot blame our people to turn to what is around them when costs of cooking fuel jump so much. And this is an issue not just for rural areas but in settlements around our country people are also turning to any means including petty crime to make ends meet to pay for fuel.

"Our agriculture and transport sectors need relief on the cost of diesel. Failing to do so is increasing the cost of everyday items such as rice, sugar, flour, PMV rides and other essentials.

"One example of the impact is an agriculture company in the Markham Valley, which employs more than 4000 staff and an additional 1000 seasonal workers, is faced with a rising fuel bill that is increasing operational costs by multi-millions of kina.

"Of course, without help from Government, businesses like this will lay off workers and increase the price of their products.

"I appeal to Mr Marape and Mr Ling-Stuckey to stay home from their jet-setting, election fund-raising junkets and understand what our everyday people are struggling with and put in place a subsidy for kerosene, Zoom and the agriculture and transport sectors."

Illegal loggers detained

BY MIRIAM ZARRIGA

THE Immigration and Citizenship Authority Special Operations team has repatriated 22 men into Port Moresby from Wewak, East Sepik Province over alleged involvement in illegal logging in Hawain.

The 22 foreign nationals are detained at the Bomana Immigration Centre with one of the man yet to be flown into Port Moresby.

Chief Migration Officer Stanis Hulahu told the *Post-Courier* that two companies had been operating in locations that had not been approved.

"Both companies had been given licenses to operate in Turubu, East Sepik and Lamolmila, Central Province respectively and not in Hawain," he said.

"Ten of the 22 men were part of one company that had been issued a Local Forest Area (LFA) License for Turubu which is not a logging site but an agricultural project after logging activities were undertaken, while the remaining 12 were part of a company that had been issued with a LFA License for Lamolmila.

"However, on inspection by the Special Immigration operations team, the men were found at Hawain logging pond on Friday April 1.

"During the inspection there were logs piled up at the log pond, including heavy machinery, a tug boat and pontoon.

"According to locals, the tug boat and pontoon brought in heavy machinery from Central Province to what is known as the Kalong log Pond last year.

"From close inspection of the work permits issued, both companies do not have the LFA Licenses to harvest logs in Hawain.

"ICA was made aware of a complaint by a local and on inspection, 10 expatriates with work permits were found on site and had been working at the log pond and logging area."

"Another 12 expatriates with work permits were also on site."

Further investigations by the ICA Special Operations team found that the both companies were illegally operating in Hawain LFA."

The work permit inspector issued infringement notices to 12 expatriates under Section 6 of the Employment of Non-Citizens Act 2007 and issued infringement notices to the other 10 expatriates with work per-

mits who committed an offence under the Employment of Non-Citizens Act 2007. Infringement Notices were issued under Section 57 of the Employment of Non-Citizens Act 2007.

Work Permits under one of the companies will be cancelled by the Chief Migration officer under the amended Employment of Non-Citizens Act 2022.

"There is gross abuse of work permits issued to both companies.

"The entry permit to be cancelled by the Minister under Migration Act 1978, and all 22 non-citizens under both companies to be removed from PNG," he said.

"Their involvement in the logging activities at Hawain is a direct breach of the conditions of their entry permits. Also their sponsors will be penalised accordingly."

Namah cautions govt, banks with loans on eve of elections

OPPOSITION Leader Belden Namah has cautioned the Government and banks against dishing out loans for projects on the eve of elections.

He said extension of loans could be seen as partisan support for the Government at a crucial time.

Mr Namah said he was making this point in light of Cabinet decision of 18 March, 2022, approving a domestic loan of K1.3 billion from a syndicate of domestic banks and superannuation funds led by Bank

South Pacific to fund the Connect PNG program.

"This is an important project that began under the O'Neill Government," he said.

"Prime Minister James Marape had the opportunity from May 30, 2019 to March 2022, a period of 34 months, to draw up policies and programs and organise loans.

"Instead, he has been running around the country and abroad preaching and delivering nothing.

"Mr Marape has left it to the last minute, weeks before the issue of writs, to approve a massive loan that will put enormous upward pressure on our already untenable debt position while at the same time crowding out much needed finance for ailing existing local businesses and new businesses to start up."

Mr Namah said every local bank and financial institution ought to know that election time in PNG

was not a time when government work was active.

"Election time in PNG is when political parties and candidates are traversing the country and wooing voters to elect into Parliament.

"Any loan that is obtained in the dying moments of the 10th Parliament will open all involved to allegations of partisan support for the Government in office to part fund the coming national elections."



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