

PRIME MINISTER MARAPE WELCOMES PENRITH PANTHERS SUPPORT FOR PNG NRL DEAL



L-R: PNG NRL Bid Lead Andrew Hill, Digicel PNG Senior Vice President Lorna Macpherson, Prime Minister James Marape, Penrith Panthers Chief Executive Officer Mathew Cameron and Managing Director Kumul Petroleum Holdings Wapu Sonk

Prime Minister James Marape has welcomed the support of Australian National Rugby League (NRL)'s reigning premiers the Penrith Panthers for Papua New Guinea's NRL Deal which is set to have a PNG-based NRL Team participate in the professional elite competition from 2028.

Following the historic NRL deal announcement by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese last December (2024) in Sydney, Australia, for a PNG Team to enter the NRL from 2028, opportunities for greater people-to-people connections, sports tourism, business and commerce activities have been identified and are expected to boost the existing unique bond between PNG and Australia, mainly based on political and social history. With the Penrith Panthers Club Chief Executive Officer Matthew Cameron visiting PNG this week and declaring support for PNG's NRL Deal as the nation prepares for 2028, when an NRL team will be based out of Port Moresby, Prime Minister Marape acknowledges the support from the Panthers, which is a Club that has won four (4) NRL premierships in a row from 2021 to 2024.

In a significant event held at the Stanley Hotel on February 6, to have the formalities of the Penrith Panthers' support for the PNG NRL Deal and Prime Minister Marape's acknowledgement of the support, Marape stated: "Your (Penrith Panthers CEO and Club)

presence here and your expression of support towards PNG's NRL Deal that was declared last December in Sydney means a lot to me and Papua New Guinea, especially as the number one club in the NRL at the moment coming in to show support in this manner. I really appreciate what is happening here.

"Rugby League has turned out to be a great spectator sport, not just in Australia, PNG and the Pacific region, but it is gaining popularity and interest in other parts of the world. Twenty to thirty years' time I see this code of sport going deeply into the entertainment arena for bigger countries like the United States and even into Asian countries."

PM Marape said for Papua New Guinea joining the NRL competition in the next few years in this generation and era is special and is exciting as the sport of rugby league expands its borders beyond Australia and the Pacific, as well as the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe.

"For Papua New Guinea, joining the NRL is not just about sport. It is also nation building, and people-to-people connections with Australia and other countries.

"At this juncture I want to acknowledge Australian High Commissioner John Feakes and my counter-part Australian Prime Minister Hon. Anthony Albanese for supporting us every step of the way until the successful completion of our NRL Bid Process, as we prepare for 2028.

"Our two nations (PNG and Australia) have special historic relations founded on Australia granting us Independence in 1975.

"And back then in 1975, the Penrith Panthers were only a 19-year-old Football Club. Next year (2026) will be the Panthers' 70th year as an NRL Club, sporting franchise and of course the business it is today.

"As I recall the year 1991 when I was a student at the University of Papua New Guinea, I was a Penrith Panthers fan and I witnessed the Brad Fittler-led side that won the Club's inaugural premiership.

"The Club then went on to also win the 2003 NRL premiership and then have been Premiers over the last four consecutive years. And it's great to have such a successful Club support PNG's NRL Deal while I am Prime Minister. I appreciate the Club very much," he said. Continuing their unique relationship with PNG this year, the Penrith Panthers Football Club was also the first NRL Club to play an official trial match in PNG at the National Football Stadium in Port Moresby against the PNG Hunters in 2016.

Prime Minister Marape reminded the Penrith Panthers: "You definitely have a good fan base here in Papua New Guinea and with us joining the NRL from 2028, you can expect your fans from PNG and other places watching and supporting you live. All the best for the future and appreciate your support."



Issue 2

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SPECIAL AUDIT INTO CONNECT PNG PROGRAM SET FOR MARCH



L-R: Department of Prime Minister & NEC Principal Internal Auditor Barry Egu, Department of Works Deputy Secretary Field Operation Brian Wesly, Deloitte Office Managing Partner Herbert Maguma and Department of Prime Minister & NEC Deputy Secretary Operations Joshua Uvao

Acting Chief Secretary to Government Ivan Pomaleu, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, a global professional services firm and Norths Projects Ltd, a Brisbane based engineering firm, signed an agreement this week to commence a Special Audit into the government's biggest ticket project, Connect PNG Programme.

The signing took place on February 25, by Acting Chief Secretary Pomaleu, Deloitte, and Norths as a formality to commence work next month.

Acting Chief Secretary Pomaleu said he was pleased to have Deloitte and Norths independently undertake this special audit managed by his office through the department's Internal Audit Branch.

Mr Pomaleu said the work will begin in March, and the Audit Team will be conducting physical inspections of all Phase One (1) projects throughout eight (8) provinces.

The primary aim of the 20-year Connect PNG Programme is to improve road connectivity across the country to support economic growth, social development, and national integration.

Since the launch of the Connect PNG Programme Project in 2020 and two (2) years later, when work commenced to date, there was no audit done, and so this will be the first since 2022.

This audit will focus particularly on ensuring proper use of public funds, assessing project performance, identifying irregularities or unethical practices, improving

efficiency, monitoring compliance with laws and policies, enhancing public trust and confidence, and evaluating sustainability and long-term impact.

The Acting Chief Secretary has also called on provincial governments to collaborate with the Audit Team to ensure a smooth flow of work.

"I call for collaboration from all the respective agencies, provincial governments, project managers, and contractors concerned with the progress of this project for a successful outcome of this special audit work."

"The outcome of this work will not only benefit the government of the day but the people of Papua New Guinea as well," Mr Pomaleu said.

Department Vision and Mission Statement

Our vision is to provide strategic leadership in supporting the Government of PNG in the Development, Coordination and Implementation of sound policies, programs and effective governance that works for the benefit of the people.

Our mission is to provide coherent, high quality and timely advise and support to the Prime Minister, the National Executive Council and the Chief Secretary to Government.

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Message from the Acting Chief Secretary to Government

Welcome everyone to the Issue 2 of the 2025 edition of the Inside Melanesian Haus monthly newsletter.

I would like to take this time to acknowledge everyone's contribution towards the smooth operations of the Department last year and your continued dedication to the call to serve the people of Papua New Guinea.

As we in the 50th year of our Independence as a Sovereign Nation, everyone of us must continue to work together to continue to deliver quality basic services to our people right across the country, and enable them to become economically viable, leading to economic independence.

Do not forget to adopt Christian values in your work ethics and your workplaces as well. Let us all work together with honesty, respect and tolerance to take back PNG. In this issue of the 2025 Edition of the Inside Melanesian Haus Newsletter, on

page 1, we bring to you the Acting Chief Secretary's announcement of a special audit into Connect PNG program to commence in March. On page 2, Prime Minister Marape pays tribute to Trevan Clough OL MBE RNO Oly. On page 3, Prime Minister Marape calls for expedited Public Service appointments. On page 4, media urged to hold leaders and public servants accountable. On page 5, Prime Minister Marape sets out vision for a stronger Papua New Guinea Defence Force. On page 6, the Prime Minister reaffirms commitment to business growth and economic expansion at Back to Business Breakfast. On page 7, Papua New Guineans called to respect the Rule of Law and condemn lawlessness. On page 8, Prime Minister Marape demands urgent reforms in State-Owned Enterprises to drive economic growth. On page 9, PNG-Australia relations strengthened in key meetings

in Sydney. On page 10, Cabinet opens year with Dedication Service. On page 11, PM Marape leads comprehensive government review ahead of 20-Year National Roadmap. On page 12, Prime Minister Marape welcomes Papua New Guinea's membership in the Council of Palm Oil producing countries. On page 13, Education and Economic Reforms to drive national development discussed by Prime Minister Marape and World Bank Officials. On page 14, PM Marape confirms Papua LNG advancing towards FID amid strong economic growth. On page 15, Minister Duma commended for Air Niugini's historic fleet expansion. On page 16, PM Marape welcomes Penrith Panthers support for PNG NRL deal. Happy Reading!

Ivan Pomaleu, OBE
Acting Chief Secretary

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PRIME MINISTER MARAPE PAYS TRIBUTE TO TREVAN CLOUGH OL MBE RNO OLY

"Trevan Clough was more than a corporate leader—he was a man who believed in the potential of Papua New Guinea and its people. His legacy will continue to inspire future generations of business leaders and entrepreneurs in our country," says Prime Minister James Marape.

Prime Minister Marape made this statement on the passing of Trevan Clough and expressed his deepest condolences to his family and the entire Brian Bell Group.

"On behalf of the Government and the people of Papua New Guinea, I extend our heartfelt sympathies to the Clough family and the Brian Bell Group during this difficult time.

"For more than 57 years, Trevan Clough dedicated his life to the growth and success of the Brian Bell Group, contributing immensely to the business sector in Papua New Guinea. From his early days working alongside Sir Brian Bell to leading the company's expansion across the country, Trevan Clough played a pivotal role in shaping one of PNG's most respected and enduring businesses.

"Mr Clough was instrumental in developing key business divisions, including technical services, agriculture, and major projects, reinforcing the company's commitment to providing high-quality services to Papua New Guineans.

"His leadership, vision, and deep commitment to PNG helped strengthen local enterprise, providing employment and essential services to our people. As we celebrate 50 years of independence, we also acknowledge the contributions of individuals like Trevan Clough, who invested their time and expertise in building this nation's business landscape."

Prime Minister Marape reaffirmed his government's commitment to supporting businesses that share in the vision of a stronger, self-reliant Papua New Guinea.

"Trevan Clough's contribution will not be forgotten, and we join his family, colleagues, and friends in mourning his passing while celebrating his outstanding legacy."

MINISTER DUMA COMMENDS FOR AIR NIUGINI'S HISTORIC FLEET EXPANSION

State Enterprises Minister William Duma was praised for his leadership in securing new aircraft for Air Niugini, marking the first major fleet acquisition since the late 1970s.

Prime Minister James Marape praised Minister Duma following a high-level meeting on February 18 with Minister Duma, Air Niugini Chief Executive Officer Gary Seddon, Kumul Consolidated Holdings (KCH) Managing Director Prof. David Kavanamur, and key SOE leaders, where the airline's K5 billion transformation strategy was presented.

Seddon highlighted that Air Niugini is undergoing its largest capital investment in history, with 13 new aircraft arriving between 2025 and 2028, beginning with three Airbus A220s in September 2025, coinciding with Papua New Guinea's 50th Independence Anniversary.

"This is a historic achievement for Papua New Guinea, and I acknowledge Minister Duma for his vision and commitment in ensuring our national airline is modernised," Prime Minister Marape said.

"The purchase of these aircraft is a significant milestone, reflecting our government's dedication to strengthening key national assets and enhancing connectivity for our people." The Prime Minister emphasised that Air Niugini's new fleet will enhance



Air Niugini CEO Gary Seddon presenting a report for Air Niugini during a high level meeting with Prime Minister James Marape and Minister for State Enterprises William Duma

service reliability, boost tourism, and strengthen trade opportunities.

"We are investing in our future, ensuring that Air Niugini remains competitive and continues to serve our country well," he added.

"This is a proud moment for Papua New Guinea. I thank Minister Duma for his leadership in driving this transformative initiative for our national carrier."

The Prime Minister also welcomed the airline's expansion plans, particularly the fleet modernisation, stating: "A modern fleet will significantly improve connectivity and service delivery across

the country. The government fully supports this investment and will assist by improving airport infrastructure and expanding pilot training initiatives to ensure the long-term sustainability of our national airline."

Seddon welcomed the government's strong support, stating: "Air Niugini's transformation is critical for PNG's economic and social development. Air transport is a vital link for business, tourism, and national connectivity. This investment ensures a modern, reliable, and financially sustainable airline."

PRIME MINISTER MARAPE CONGRATULATES HON. JOTHAM NAPAT ON ELECTION AS VANUATU'S NEW PRIME MINISTER

On behalf of the Government and people of Papua New Guinea, Prime Minister James Marape extended his warmest congratulations on February 11 to Hon. Jotham Napat on his election as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Prime Minister Marape acknowledges the enduring relationship between Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, built upon shared Melanesian heritage, cultural bonds, and a mutual commitment to regional collaboration. "Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu have long stood together as brothers in the Melanesian family, striving for regional peace, economic prosperity, and a unified Pacific voice on the global stage. I look forward to working closely with Prime Minister Napat to further strengthen our bilateral relations and advance our shared aspirations," Prime Minister Marape stated.

He also expressed gratitude to

outgoing Prime Minister Charlot Salwai for his dedicated service and reaffirmed his intention to collaborate with Prime Minister Napat as he has with his predecessors to promote the interests of both nations.

"I extend my sincere thanks to former Prime Minister Salwai for his leadership and contributions to our bilateral relationship. As I have worked collaboratively with previous leaders of Vanuatu, I am committed to continuing this partnership with Prime Minister Napat for the benefit of our two nations and our shared regional interests."

"As active members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu have maintained strong cooperation in trade, investment, education, and regional security. The PNG business community continues to play a significant role in Vanuatu's economy, and the presence of

Vanuatu students studying in PNG further strengthens the people-to-people connections between the two countries," he said.

Prime Minister Marape reaffirmed Papua New Guinea's commitment to supporting Vanuatu in its recovery and long-term development efforts, especially in the aftermath of recent natural disasters.

"Prime Minister Napat assumes leadership at a pivotal time, and I am confident in his ability to guide Vanuatu toward a resilient and prosperous future. Papua New Guinea stands ready to work alongside Vanuatu in addressing regional challenges, including climate resilience, economic development, and trade cooperation," he emphasised.

Prime Minister Marape concluded by extending his best wishes to Prime Minister Napat and his government.

AUSTRALIA'S PGK 1.4 BILLION LOAN AND PNG'S FISCAL STABILITY CLARIFIED

Prime Minister James Marape has provided assurances on the K1.4 billion (approximately A\$580 million) loan from the Australian Government, stating that it is well within Papua New Guinea's 2024 Budget framework and does not increase the country's debt burden beyond planned fiscal targets.

Speaking at the NASFUND FM100 Talkback Show launch on February 10, PM Marape reiterated that the loan is part of the government's fiscal strategy and fits within its ongoing fiscal consolidation plan.

"It's within our 3.3% deficit of last year. Those of you commentators in the economic space, our report on our budgeting side is clearly outlined in our final budget outcomes," the Prime Minister explained.

PM Marape emphasised that PNG remains on track towards achieving a balanced budget by 2027, with consistent deficit reductions over the past five years.

"We want to move to a surplus in 2027, and we are on target. In 2020, our deficit was at a high of over 8% due to COVID-19. Since then, we have scaled down: in 2022, it was around 5.3%, in 2023, it was 4.3%, and last year, we brought it down to 3.3%," he stated.

The Prime Minister reassured the public that the Australian loan is not an additional financial burden but rather part of an agreed-upon fiscal framework.

"The Australian financing is within the 2024 money plan, part of our 3.3% deficit element. It is not something new and does not aggravate our debt plan. It is consistent," he said.

Furthermore, the terms of the loan include a grace period and a 4.2% interest rate, making it a structured and manageable component of PNG's financial plan.

"By the way, concessional means grace period and a 4.2% interest rate," PM Marape added.

The government remains committed to responsible financial management while ensuring that resources are effectively utilised for economic growth. PNG's fiscal strategy is aligned with long-term economic resilience, and the government will continue to make strategic financial decisions that balance growth and fiscal responsibility.

PM MARAPE CONFIRMS PAPUA LNG ADVANCING TOWARDS FID AMID STRONG ECONOMIC GROWTH

Prime Minister James Marape has reaffirmed his government's commitment to advancing the Papua LNG project, confirming that Final Investment Decision (FID) is expected by the end of 2025, paving the way for a new wave of economic growth in Papua New Guinea's oil and gas sector.

Speaking at the launch of the NASFUND FM100 Talkback Show on February 10, the Prime Minister addressed recent delays, explaining that cost escalations had necessitated a review of engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contracts to align with financial expectations.

"The initial construction cost estimate for Papua LNG was US\$12 billion, but tenders came back at US\$18 billion, which has prompted the project developers to re-evaluate and optimise costs before proceeding to FID," he explained.

He noted that TotalEnergies and ExxonMobil remain committed to progressing the project, as reaffirmed during his recent discussions with company executives at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Once FID is announced, Papua LNG is expected to generate significant construction activity over the next six to seven years, creating employment opportunities, supporting local businesses, and boosting government revenues. The Prime Minister also confirmed that the P'nyang gas project will follow Papua LNG in sequence, extending the economic benefits of the petroleum sector for the next decade.

"Papua LNG will create a multi-year economic stimulus, driving investment in infrastructure and services. We are ensuring that P'nyang and other gas projects are carefully sequenced to sustain economic growth, employment, and business opportunities over an extended period."

He encouraged Papua New Guinean businesses, SMEs, and workers to prepare for the opportunities arising from these large-scale investments.

Prime Minister Marape also

highlighted strong economic fundamentals, revealing that foreign exchange reserves have surpassed US\$4 billion, marking the highest level in PNG's history. Additionally, forex supply is sufficient for 18 months, indicating a stable financial outlook.

"The growth of non-extractive sectors—particularly in agriculture, fisheries, and manufacturing—is starting to bear fruit, with non-resource sector growth exceeding 4% for the first time in our nation's history," he added.

The government remains committed to structural economic reforms, ensuring that the benefits of resource projects flow into other industries to drive diversified and sustainable economic growth.

In addition to Papua LNG, several major resource projects are moving towards development, including:

- Wafi-Golpu gold and copper project – Final agreements expected in 2025.

- Pasca A offshore gas project – Set to contribute to PNG's LNG portfolio.

- P'nyang gas project – Following Papua LNG to ensure long-term energy sector expansion.

With an estimated US\$20-25 billion in construction activity over the next decade, the government is ensuring that PNG is positioned for long-term prosperity.

Prime Minister Marape called on PNG businesses, SMEs, and local entrepreneurs to position themselves strategically to benefit from the upcoming investment boom.

"We are in a strong position for economic growth, and I encourage our financial institutions, superannuation funds, and private sector players to align with these developments. We must ensure that Papua New Guineans are at the forefront of these opportunities."

The government will continue engaging with investors, development partners, and the business community to maintain momentum towards sustainable economic expansion as Papua New Guinea moves toward its 50th anniversary of independence.

PRIME MINISTER MARAPE CALLS FOR EXPEDITED PUBLIC SERVICE APPOINTMENTS

Prime Minister James Marape has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to ensuring greater efficiency in the appointment of public servants, stressing the need for a more streamlined process in filling key departmental and agency leadership positions.

Speaking at the launch of the FM100 Talkback Show in Port Moresby on February 10, Prime Minister Marape acknowledged concerns over the prolonged tenure of acting appointments and assured the public that the Government is prioritising the confirmation of permanent positions.

"The appointment of department heads and other key public officials follows a rigorous process, involving multiple agencies, including the Department of Personnel Management (DPM) and the Public Services Commission (PSC), before final deliberations by the National Executive Council (NEC)."

"We recognise the importance of stability and certainty within the public service. Acting appointments should, in principle, last no more than three months. Where necessary, reappointments may be made on an acting basis, but our priority remains the confirmation of permanent appointments as soon as possible," he stated.

As part of Papua New Guinea's 50th anniversary reflections, the Prime Minister also highlighted the



Prime Minister James Marape speaking at the FM100 NASFUND TalkBack Show

Government's ongoing commitment to reforming the public service to enhance efficiency, accountability, and service delivery.

"The Government is committed to modernising public service procedures, improving governance, and ensuring that our people receive the highest standard of service," he said.

The Prime Minister has directed the relevant Government agencies to

expedite the appointment process, particularly for critical institutions such as the Correctional Service, which plays a vital role in the judicial system.

The Marape-Rosso Government remains steadfast in its vision to strengthen public administration and ensure that key leadership positions are occupied by capable and qualified individuals who are dedicated to serving the nation.

PM MARAPE REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT ON MINIMUM WAGE

Prime Minister James Marape has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to reviewing and increasing the national minimum wage, ensuring that Papua New Guinean workers receive fair remuneration that aligns with the rising cost of living.

Speaking at the FM100 Talkback Show in Port Moresby on February 10, Prime Minister Marape acknowledged that the Minimum Wage Board has not convened since 2014-2015 and assured the public that this process has now been reactivated under the leadership of Labour and Employment Minister, Hon. Kessy Sawang.

Prime Minister Marape also commended Minister Sawang for her efforts in reconstituting the tripartite committee on this important work.

"The minimum wage has remained at K3.50 per hour for too long, and the Government recognises the need for

an adjustment."

"We are working closely with all stakeholders, including the Employers' Federation, to ensure that any wage increase is fair, sustainable, and reflective of economic conditions," he said.

The Prime Minister further emphasised that a balanced approach is necessary to ensure that wage increases do not adversely impact businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are crucial to the nation's economic growth.

"The business community plays a key role in our economy, and we want to ensure that an increase in the minimum wage does not place undue strain on employers, particularly SMEs."

"That is why we are consulting widely to find a realistic baseline adjustment that benefits both workers and businesses," he said.

Prime Minister Marape highlighted

that the review of the minimum wage aligns with the Government's long-term employment strategy, which aims to create one million jobs and improve the overall labour market conditions in Papua New Guinea.

He also noted the importance of conducting a labour force survey to obtain accurate data on employment trends, wage structures, and workforce needs.

"Our focus is on ensuring that Papua New Guineans are fairly paid for their work while maintaining a competitive business environment."

"We are committed to finalising a fair wage increase that will help families cope with rising costs while ensuring job security and business sustainability." The Government is expected to make an official announcement on the new minimum wage rate once the Minimum Wage Board concludes its deliberations.

PM URGES MEDIA TO HOLD LEADERS AND PUBLIC SERVANTS ACCOUNTABLE

Prime Minister James Marape said the media industry can hold leaders and public servants accountable for their decisions and actions as the country prepares to celebrate its 50th independence anniversary.

He said this when launching the radio FM100 Talkback Show program for 2025 in Port Moresby this month. Prime Minister Marape said media plays a vital role in gathering and disseminating the right information to citizens to make informed decisions, and they must live up to that noble role.

"I want the media including FM100 to hold all of us to account. You are the voice of accountability in our society, and it is not just to FM100 but all our media outlets, and you all know that in the last six years, I have never tampered with your editorial

"I have never even with EMTV, a government owned TV station, FM100 a government owned radio station including the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) James Marape and the Pangu Government that I lead never tamper with the editorial decisions in the newsrooms.

"That is simply out of our respect that the media, newsrooms including TV and radio stations must be left alone from interference. You remain the fourth estate to advocating correctly what is happening in society," said

Prime Minister Marape.

He said his government respects and will always respect the media's rights and responsibility, and the media must honour its side.

"We also demand you to take your roles and responsibilities seriously and make sure correct news and good news, and I repeat correct news and good news must be uttered to our country.

"Our people need these types of news to be disseminated properly from proper media outlets and not social media platforms.

"You have an important anchor role to play in the collection, compilation and dissemination of real and good news to our people get the right news to be informed and encouraged for a better tomorrow," said Prime Minister Marape. He appealed to FM100 Radio Station to take the lead every day and not just the sanctioned Talkback shows.

"In your everyday conversation from your microphone, you have to utter positive news to our people and make sure that our people are pointed to the right directions."

Prime Minister Marape also expressed concerns that many of the government programs and policies in existence that will help the people are unfortunately unheard of by the people or simple they do not know and cannot seek those services like in health and education. He said there are programs like the HELP

in education, overseas labor mobility program, and the youth initiatives that the people must know.

"I appeal to FM100 to capture some of these programs and government initiatives on your NASFUND Talkback Show and also give an emphasize to programs that concern the youth as they are our future.

"I thank NASFUND for sponsoring the FM100 Talkback Show as it is very crucial to have an informed society. We look forward to the continued partnership in the next 50 years," said Prime Minister Marape.

The Prime Minister also said that the Public Service, departmental heads and agencies of government have been tasked to account for what they have done to implement some of his Marape-Rosso Government's policy directives and initiatives over the last six year.

"I am charging all my public servants six years on from me taking office. I expect results from those agencies tasked to do better for our country. They are being asked to account for themselves and to the country as to what we all have collectively done.

"The media plays a role in this regard by ensuring the program and initiatives are implemented and the results disseminated to the people to make informed choices in life," said Prime Minister Marape.

PRIME MINISTER MARAPE ACKNOWLEDGES AUSTRALIA'S ROLE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S HISTORY

Australia played a significant role in governing Papua New Guinea, particularly under the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU).

Prime Minister James Marape expressed deep appreciation for Australia's historical ties with Papua New Guinea following his visit to the Australian Museum, National Library of Australia, and National Archives of Australia on February 2024.

His visit highlighted the profound and enduring relationship between the two nations, particularly as Papua New Guinea prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary of independence this year. During his tour of these institutions, Prime Minister Marape explored rich collections documenting Papua New Guinea's shared history with Australia, dating back to the late 1800s. These archives hold invaluable records that trace Papua New Guinea's journey

from colonial administration to independence in 1975, shedding light on the deep bond between the two countries.

"I was greatly moved by the historical collections preserved in these Australian institutions, which capture the depth of our shared past. These archives reflect the many chapters of our journey— from the early colonial days, through World War I and II, the Australian administration, and finally to our independence in 1975. They offer an important window into our identity as a nation and our long-standing relationship with Australia," he said. Prime Minister Marape highlighted the significant role Australia played in governing Papua and New Guinea, particularly under the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) during World War II. Established in 1942, ANGAU was a military government that managed both Papua (an Australian

territory) and New Guinea (formerly under German control until World War I, when Australia assumed administration under a League of Nations mandate in 1920).

Under ANGAU, Papua New Guinea became a crucial base for Allied operations in the Pacific. The administration coordinated local labour, wartime logistics, and civil governance while ensuring that essential services remained functional amid the war. Following Japan's surrender in 1945, Australia transitioned from a military administration to a civilian government, paving the way for the United Nations Trust Territory of Papua and New Guinea in 1949. From 1949 until independence in 1975, Australia administered Papua New Guinea under a UN mandate, investing in infrastructure, education, and

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PM MARAPE AND WORLD BANK OFFICIALS DISCUSS EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC REFORMS

A high-level meeting was held recently to discuss two major development initiatives between World Bank and PNG Government.

Prime Minister James Marape held a high-level meeting on February 4 with senior officials from the World Bank, including Country Director for Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands Stephen Ndegwa, PNG Country Manager Khwima Nthara, and Lead Economist for Education in East Asia and the Pacific Lars Sondergaard. Also in attendance were Treasurer Ian Ling-Stuckey, Chief Secretary Ivan Pomaleu, and National Planning and Monitoring Secretary Koney Samuel.

Discussions focused on two major development initiatives: the New Country Partnership Framework (2025–2031) and the Learning Enhancement & Access Project, both of which align with the government's broader vision for economic growth, education reform, and social transformation.

The New Country Partnership Framework (CPF) 2025–2031 was a central topic of discussion, as it sets out key priority areas for development collaboration between Papua New Guinea and the World Bank over the next six years. The CPF is designed to address critical economic and



L - R: Treasury Ian Ling-Stuckey, Prime Minister James Marape, World Bank Country Director PNG & Pacific Islands Stephen Ndegwa, PNG Country Manager Khwima Nthara and Lead Economist for Education in East Asia and the Pacific Lars Sondergaard

infrastructure challenges, with a focus on four key outcome areas:

1. Increased private investment to create more and better jobs;
2. Improved infrastructure connectivity to link communities to essential services;
3. Enhanced human capital outcomes through better health and education systems; and
4. Strengthened macroeconomic management and institutional governance.

The CPF aims to support Papua New

Guinea's long-term economic growth by fostering investment, enhancing infrastructure development, and strengthening financial systems.

Parallel to the economic discussions, the meeting also focused on education reform through the Learning Enhancement & Access Project, an initiative led by the National Department of Education. This project is designed to improve access to quality education, particularly in rural and underserved communities, while addressing critical gaps in literacy, numeracy, and teacher capacity.

PRIME MINISTER MARAPE REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO BOUGAINVILLE PEACE

Papua New Guinea Government remains steadfast in upholding the Bougainville Peace Agreement," says Prime Minister James Marape.

The Prime Minister has reaffirmed his government's unwavering commitment to the Bougainville Peace Agreement on February 17, announcing a constitutional amendment to permanently prohibit the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) from engaging in combat operations in Bougainville or against any citizens of Papua New Guinea.

Prime Minister Marape made this announcement during a strategic meeting with Defence Minister Hon. Billy Joseph, Defence Secretary John Akipe, and PNGDF Commander Rear Admiral Philip Polewara on Sunday, February 16, 2025.

"Our government remains steadfast in upholding the Bougainville Peace Agreement. The Defence Force will never again be deployed in combat in Bougainville or any part of Papua New Guinea against our own people."

"Any issues of law and order will be handled by the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC), which we are strengthening to effectively deal with internal security matters," he said.

In addition to reinforcing its commitment to peace, the Government is also working to expand and modernise the PNGDF, with a particular focus on building a strong Defence Reserve Force.

"The Defence Force will recruit and train more engineers, pilots, doctors, and other technical specialists, ensuring that skilled professionals are available for both national service and broader workforce needs."

"To support this initiative, the government will introduce special scholarship programmes, enabling Papua New Guineans to receive Defence Force training in critical fields. Upon completion, they will have the option to serve as Defence reservists or be engaged in civilian work while remaining on standby for national

service.

"Our vision is for the PNGDF to be a force for national sovereignty, security, and development. We are strengthening its role in infrastructure development, disaster response, and medical services while ensuring it remains focused on protecting our nation's borders," he said.

Prime Minister Marape emphasised that these reforms are part of a broader effort to modernise the PNGDF, ensuring it remains a professional, service-oriented force that contributes to nation-building and regional stability.

"Our Defence Force is being strengthened to meet the challenges of a modern Papua New Guinea. We are enhancing its capacity for disaster relief, emergency response, and national development, making sure it serves the best interests of our country."

"The Government's commitment to peace, security, and national development remains firm," he said.

PNG BECOMES MEMBER IN THE COUNCIL OF PALM OIL PRODUCING COUNTRIES

PNG joins Indonesia, Malaysia, and Honduras as the fourth member of the global palm oil organisation, strengthening the country's position in international trade and sustainability advocacy.

Prime Minister James Marape has welcomed Papua New Guinea's official membership in the Council of Palm Oil Producing Countries (CPOPC) on February 19, marking a historic milestone for the nation's oil palm industry.

Speaking at a high-level meeting attended by CPOPC Secretary-General Dr Rizal Affandi Lukman, Deputy Secretary-General Datuk Nageeb Wahab, PNG's Oil Palm Minister Hon. Francis Maneke, Indonesian Ambassador His Excellency Andriana Supandy, Agriculture Secretary Dr Sergie Bang, and Oil Palm Industry Corporation General Secretary Kepson Pupita, Prime Minister Marape reaffirmed PNG's commitment to responsible and sustainable palm oil production.

Prime Minister Marape emphasised PNG's active role in past CPOPC discussions, highlighting the importance of joining as a full member. "This is a significant moment for our country. We appreciate Indonesia and Malaysia for embracing PNG into the CPOPC family. Together, we can strengthen our advocacy and ensure that the global palm oil market remains fair and sustainable," he stated.

He noted that PNG has immense potential for growth, highlighting that over one million hectares of grassland can be utilised for palm oil cultivation. "As a major forest nation, we will ensure that our palm oil production meets international sustainability standards

and that we counter any misleading narratives about deforestation," he said. The Prime Minister assured stakeholders that PNG is committed to enhancing investment opportunities and improving market access.

"We must work together to ensure PNG's palm oil meets the requirements of international markets, including compliance with European Union regulations. Our industry must align with global standards while also benefiting from the economic opportunities that palm oil provides," he said.

He also highlighted PNG's ambition to develop downstream processing and biofuel production, citing Indonesia's progress in palm oil-based renewable energy.

"We must explore palm oil as a fuel alternative, as Indonesia has done successfully. This will not only boost our economy but also position us as a key player in the green energy sector," he stated.

CPOPC Secretary-General Dr Rizal Affandi Lukman welcomed PNG's membership, stating, "Papua New Guinea's entry into CPOPC strengthens our collective advocacy for fair trade and sustainable palm oil production. PNG's involvement will bring significant contributions to the industry, particularly in expanding market access and reinforcing sustainable practices." Dr Lukman also emphasised that PNG's inclusion in CPOPC aligns with global efforts to address regulatory challenges such as European Union deforestation compliance.

"We have been engaging with European stakeholders to ensure that regulatory frameworks recognise sustainable palm oil production. PNG's

inclusion allows us to strengthen these discussions and present a united front," he added.

Prime Minister Marape reaffirmed PNG's commitment to strengthening advocacy efforts alongside Indonesia and Malaysia.

"We must stand together to promote fair trade policies and counter any negative narratives surrounding palm oil. As major forest nations, we have the responsibility to present our case and showcase that we are sustainable producers," he said.

Additionally, he reiterated the government's intention to expand palm oil into biofuel production. "Palm oil is more than just an edible oil; it is a critical resource for the future of green energy. We need to ensure that we fully maximise its potential," he said.

Recognising industry challenges such as high operational costs and investment hurdles, the Prime Minister reassured investors that PNG is taking steps to improve the business environment.

"We are working on land mobilisation programmes and tax incentives to make PNG a more attractive investment destination," he announced.

He also highlighted the government's K100 million annual allocation for land acquisition and infrastructure support, ensuring long-term growth in the sector. "We are putting systems in place to encourage sustainable industry expansion and create more opportunities for our people," he stated. Prime Minister Marape proposed hosting a CPOPC Heads of Government Meeting, bringing together leaders from member nations to discuss trade, sustainability, and global market strategies.

PM REAFFIRMS GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT FOR IRC CYBERSECURITY

The Government of Papua New Guinea stands firmly behind the IRC as it implements recovery measures and strengthens cybersecurity frameworks to safeguard taxpayer data and national revenue systems.

Prime Minister James Marape on February 14, expressed his full support for the Internal Revenue Commission (IRC) following a recent cyber incident that temporarily disrupted key systems. "Cybersecurity is a growing global challenge, and as we modernise our institutions, we must remain vigilant against these evolving threats," said Prime Minister Marape.

"I commend Commissioner General

Sam Koim and his team for their swift and decisive response to this attack, ensuring that our country's tax administration remains secure and operational."

The IRC confirmed that the ransomware attack on 28 January 2025 affected its network and email systems but did not compromise taxpayer data stored within SIGTAS, the core tax administration system. With the assistance of KPMG's cybersecurity experts, the IRC successfully contained the attack, restored key systems, and implemented enhanced security measures to prevent future incidents.

Prime Minister Marape assured

businesses, taxpayers, and stakeholders that the Government prioritises cybersecurity resilience across all public institutions.

"The digital transformation of our tax administration is vital for economic growth and efficient revenue collection. This incident highlights the need for continuous investment in cybersecurity, not just within the IRC but across all government agencies handling sensitive data," he stated.

Despite the disruption, IRC's revenue transfer functions remained unaffected, ensuring that national budget operations continued smoothly.

GOV'T REAFFIRMS ITS COMMITMENT TO MODERNISING PNG DEFENCE FORCE

Government envisions a stronger Papua New Guinea Defence Force and the strengthening of national security.

Prime Minister James Marape on February 16, reaffirmed his government's commitment to modernising the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) and strengthening national security. Addressing senior defence officials, including Defence Minister Hon. Billy Joseph, Defence Secretary Mr John Akipe, and Commander Rear Admiral Philip Polewara, the Prime Minister outlined a bold strategy to develop a more capable, self-sufficient and disciplined military force.

"We must rebuild our defence force to be among the best in the region."

"A strong, well-equipped military is vital to protecting our sovereignty and ensuring national security in an increasingly complex world," he said.

He pointed to Israel's military strength as an example of what can be achieved with the right investment in training, discipline and technology, despite having a small population and limited landmass. He urged a shift away from a 'we cannot do it' mentality towards a vision of capability and resilience.

The Prime Minister outlined a 20-year roadmap for the defence sector, focusing on:

- **Strengthening military capability** – Rather than simply increasing personnel, the government will invest in training and equipment to create a highly efficient and professional force. Plans include maintaining three land battalions with a total force of 5,000 to 7,000 personnel.

- **Enhancing interoperability** – A joint Air Wing will be established

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MARAPE ACKNOWLEDGES AUSTRALIA'S ROLE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S HISTORY

governance to prepare the country for eventual self-rule. Australia's support played a critical role in shaping PNG's early political structures, including the formation of the House of Assembly in 1964 and the expansion of self-governance leading to full independence on September 16, 1975. Prime Minister Marape acknowledged Australia's long-standing commitment to Papua New Guinea's development, stating:

"While we engage with many countries worldwide, our relationship with



Prime Minister James Marape flanked by Minister for Defense Dr. Billy Joseph and PNGDF Commander Rear Admiral Philip Polewara

to support defence operations, law enforcement, disaster response and national security initiatives.

- **Introducing a National Volunteer Service** – Modelled on Israel's approach, this initiative will provide military training for civilians, ensuring national preparedness in times of crisis. A Reserve Force, already provided for in the Constitution, will be activated to bolster national defence.

- **Enforcing discipline** – The Prime Minister announced strict new regulations on smoking and alcohol consumption within the force. New recruits will be required to abstain from smoking and drinking for at least five years as part of a commitment to discipline and productivity. "The PNGDF is an employer, and like any employer, it has the right to set standards," he said.

- **Developing self-sufficiency** – The defence force will reduce its reliance on private contractors by restoring its

own logistical and support capabilities, including catering, medical and engineering services. Funds currently spent on outsourcing will instead be reinvested into developing PNGDF's internal capacity.

- **Ensuring financial sustainability** – Acknowledging past economic challenges, including a K2 billion revenue shortfall in 2024, the Prime Minister stressed the importance of ensuring PNGDF's long-term financial viability.

The Prime Minister also reflected on recent national security challenges, including the events of 10 January, 2024, when he remained in his office despite threats to his safety. He thanked the PNGDF for its readiness and restraint, underscoring the need for a highly professional force to protect the country from both domestic and external threats.

"Our defence force is here to safeguard Papua New Guinea, not to be deployed against our own people."

"We must work together to ensure our nation's security, so that future generations inherit a stronger, safer country," he said.

As Papua New Guinea approaches its 50th anniversary in September, the government will continue to work closely with Defence Minister Billy Joseph, Secretary John Akipe, and Commander Rear Admiral Philip Polewara to implement these strategic reforms.

Prime Minister Marape concluded by calling on all defence personnel and stakeholders to unite behind this vision, ensuring that the PNGDF becomes a modern, self-sufficient and world-class military force.

history between the two countries continues to be preserved for future generations.

He further expressed his gratitude for Australia's ongoing commitment to supporting PNG's independence celebrations, noting the significance of Australian institutions dedicating spaces to commemorate Papua New Guinea's 50th anniversary of independence.

"It is heartwarming to see these institutions recognising the significance of our golden jubilee."

Prime Minister Marape Highlights 34,000 New Jobs in Private Sector



Prime Minister James Marape

Prime Minister James Marape has commended the National Superannuation Fund (Nasfund) for recording an unprecedented 34,450 new members in 2023, a direct reflection of job creation and economic growth in Papua New Guinea's private sector.

Speaking at the launch of the Nasfund FM100 Talkback Show on February 10, Prime Minister Marape emphasised that the surge in superannuation membership is a clear indication of more Papua New Guineans securing formal employment. He attributed this milestone to the government's efforts in fostering economic expansion and creating job opportunities across various industries.

"The addition of 34,450 new members in 2023 is evidence of real jobs being created in the private sector. This demonstrates the strength of our economy and the opportunities opening up for our people," Prime Minister Marape said.

He underscored that while savings are vital, the core message of this achievement is the increasing employment rate, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, small businesses, manufacturing, and services.

"Our priority as a government is job creation. These figures confirm that more Papua New Guineans are gaining employment and securing their financial future," he added.

Prime Minister Marape also reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting job growth across both formal and informal sectors. He highlighted ongoing policy efforts to encourage more Papua New Guineans to transition into formal employment and participate in superannuation schemes.

"The expansion in Nasfund membership directly correlates with our economic policies aimed at job creation. We will continue to strengthen initiatives that drive employment and financial security for all our people," he stated.

PRIME MINISTER MARAPE REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO BUSINESS GROWTH AND ECONOMIC EXPANSION

Prime Minister James Marape addressed the annual Back to Business Breakfast on February 4, reaffirming his government's commitment to economic growth, business sector stability, and national security as Papua New Guinea approaches its 50th anniversary of independence.

In his fifth consecutive appearance at the prestigious event, organised by the PNG Business Council, Prime Minister Marape highlighted the nation's economic trajectory, which has grown from under K80 billion in 2019 to over K122 billion in 2025, despite challenges. He credited the resilience of PNG's business community, stating, "For the last 49 years, you have stood by us and contributed to the progress of our nation. Your unwavering commitment is invaluable."

Prime Minister Marape outlined his vision for PNG's economy to reach K200 billion in the near future, emphasising the importance of private sector participation. He underscored ongoing government efforts to streamline regulations, enhance investor confidence, and remove structural impediments to business growth.

"We are listening," he assured the business community.

"The government does not claim to know everything. Your input is essential in shaping policies that foster business expansion, drive innovation, and create employment."

To support local enterprises, the Prime Minister commended the contributions of Kina Bank, Bank South Pacific, National Development Bank, and other financial institutions in facilitating SME growth. He noted that over K552 million in loans had been provided to SMEs, with 3,851 new businesses supported in the past year alone.

Addressing the theme of the breakfast, "Securing Papua New Guinea," Prime Minister Marape reaffirmed the government's unwavering commitment to law and order, with a record K703 million allocated to police modernisation in 2024.

"Our police force has faced challenges, but we are implementing critical reforms to

ensure stability and security," he said. Key initiatives include:

- Increasing police personnel to 10,000 by 2030.
- Establishing a 200-man anti-terrorism task force.
- Strengthening partnerships with Australia under the PNG-Australia Bilateral Security Agreement.

• Launching the Safe City initiative in Port Moresby and Lae to enhance public safety and business confidence.

He also emphasised PNG's robust judiciary, stating, "A strong, independent judicial system is essential for business confidence. Our reforms will enhance efficiency and ensure legal security for investors."

The Prime Minister provided updates on major resource projects, including the P'nyang LNG, Papua LNG, and Pasca LNG projects, all of which will drive economic expansion over the next decade. He also highlighted the government's focus on non-resource sectors, particularly agriculture, fisheries, and manufacturing, to diversify the economy.

"We are modernising our economy, with a strong push toward import replacement and value-added industries," he stated. Initiatives include:

- The introduction of a "Fish Domestication Policy" to encourage local processing.

• A transition to processed timber exports, phasing out raw log exports.

- Expansion of the NRL investment to stimulate business activity.

• Ongoing discussions to facilitate Kina-Renminbi convertibility, easing trade with China.

The Prime Minister concluded his address by urging businesses to partner with the government in achieving PNG's economic ambitions. "Together, we can build a stronger PNG. A thriving private sector means a thriving nation," he said.

He called for continued engagement between the government and business community, inviting industry leaders to participate in regulatory reviews and policy discussions. "We want PNG to be a land of opportunity, innovation, and prosperity," he affirmed.

PM MARAPE REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE AND LEGAL REFORMS

Prime Minister James Marape reaffirmed his government's unwavering commitment to the independence of the judiciary and the continued reform of Papua New Guinea's legal system.

Speaking during a meeting on February 16, with Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) Secretary Dr Eric Kwa and other agency heads, he commended the justice sector's efforts in strengthening the rule of law and advancing critical legal reforms over the past six years.

"The country exists because of the rule of law," Prime Minister Marape stated.

"Without it, we lose the foundation of our democracy and governance. The independence and functionality of our judiciary are paramount, and my government will continue to support efforts that uphold justice and strengthen the rule of law."

Prime Minister Marape emphasised that judicial independence is a cornerstone of a functioning democracy and reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring the judiciary remains free from political influence. He highlighted the need for continued reforms to bolster judicial processes, improve case management, and enhance the efficiency of the courts.

"An independent judiciary is non-negotiable. Our courts must function without interference, and we must provide them with the necessary resources to ensure that justice is dispensed fairly and without delay," he

said.

He also underscored the importance of recruiting and retaining top legal minds, financial experts, and governance professionals to build a robust and effective justice system.

"A strong justice system is built on competence and integrity. We must ensure that our courts and legal institutions are staffed with the best professionals, not just filling positions with what is available. The rule of law must be upheld by those who are well-equipped to serve justice," he stated.

Prime Minister Marape acknowledged the collective efforts of agency heads in ensuring the justice sector functions smoothly.

He urged all legal institutions to remain proactive in addressing legal and governance challenges and encouraged DJAG to push forward with legislative reviews that align Papua New Guinea's legal system with global standards.

He also highlighted the need for digital transformation in the judiciary to improve efficiency, accessibility, and transparency.

"The justice sector must embrace digital transformation. We need to modernise case management, streamline legal procedures, and leverage technology to improve service delivery. Delayed justice is denied justice, and we must ensure that cases are heard and resolved in a timely manner," he stressed.

The Prime Minister also recognised

housing and resource allocation for legal professionals as a key priority in ensuring a strong judiciary. He noted that proper accommodation, competitive salaries, and better working conditions are necessary to attract and retain top-tier legal professionals.

"To have a competent and effective justice system, we must invest in our legal professionals. From salaries to housing and work resources, we must create an environment where the best legal minds can thrive and contribute meaningfully to our nation," he said.

He further emphasised the importance of refining legislation and legal procedures to ensure clarity, enforceability, and efficiency in the legal system.

"Legal reforms are an ongoing process. We must continuously review and refine our laws to uphold the principles of fairness and justice, ensuring that our legal framework is fit for purpose in a rapidly evolving world," he said.

Prime Minister Marape concluded by reaffirming his government's full support for DJAG and the broader justice sector, pledging continued funding, policy backing, and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen legal institutions across the country.

He also expressed deep gratitude to judges, magistrates, lawyers, and all legal professionals for their dedication to upholding the rule of law and ensuring PNG remains a just and lawful.

PM MARAPE LEAD COMPREHENSIVE GOVERNMENT REVIEW AHEAD OF 20-YEAR NATIONAL ROADMAP



Prime Minister James Marape has announced a thorough review of government performance this month, with all lead agencies' department heads and ministers set to report on their progress, challenges, and plans for the future. This three-week assessment, leading up to the March Parliament session, aims to ensure effective governance and alignment with Papua New Guinea's long-term economic vision.

"We are not a new government anymore. This is our sixth year in office, and we must be honest about what has been achieved and what still needs to be done. We cannot afford delays—we must move forward with urgency and focus," Prime Minister Marape stated.

The Prime Minister stressed that accountability is a priority, starting with his own Prime Minister's Department, followed by Treasury, Planning, Finance, and other ministries.

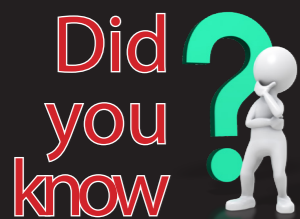
BUBBLES

Why did the employee get fired from the calendar factory?
She took a day off.

Two men are on opposite sides of the river. The first man shouts, "How do I get to the other side of the river?" The other man yells, "You are on the other side of the river!"

Why would a pig dressed in black never get bullied?
Because Batman has sworn to protect Goth-ham.

Cleans jokes courtesy of <https://www.rd.com/list/clean-jokes/>



Birds require gravity to swallow

Courtesy of <https://facts.net/did-you-know-facts/>

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OPENS YEAR WITH DEDICATION SERVICE



Prime Minister James Marape speaking at the NEC Dedication Service

The National Executive Council started the first meeting for 2025 with a dedication service facilitated by the National Executive Council Secretariat.

In attendance at the Dedication service were the full Cabinet, Secretary for the National Executive Council, Chief Secretary to Government, Secretary for Department of Justice and Attorney General, Secretary for Department of Personnel Management Ms. Taies Sansan and support staff of the National Executive Council.

In his address to Cabinet as the Chairman of the National Executive Council, Prime Minister James Marape called on the Ministers in Cabinet to do their best for people and country because everyone one of us has only one life and we do not want to find out that we did not

leave a lasting good impact at the sunset of our life.

Prime Minister Marape urged all members of Cabinet to do their best to celebrate the 50th Anniversary and also to look deep within themselves and find the beauty of service to others.

He advised the Ministers to do their best work and not to complain about others talents.

In her opening address before the Dedication Service, National Executive Council Secretary Ms. Grace So'on informed the Ministers that today was the first NEC Meeting for 2025 and as is practice, everyone is gathered before the meeting proper for the Dedication Service for 2025. Ms So'on said the purpose of the dedication service over the years was always on the Council and its business throughout the course of

the year.

She added that keeping in mind the role of the Council as the principle and highest decision-making body, whose decisions determine the position of Government and allocation of government resources towards that position; we want to also include and acknowledge all public servants behind the scene whose combined efforts making the meetings of the council possible throughout the year.

Ms So'on said the efforts of public servants includes putting together submissions, to the room and facilities that the Council meetings are held in, then coming before the Council for deliberation and decision making, to the implementation of those decisions.

PM MARAPE CALLS FOR RESPECT FOR THE RULE OF LAW, CONDEMNS LAWLESSNESS

All Papua New Guineans have been called on by Prime Minister James Marape to uphold the law.

Prime Minister Marape has issued a powerful and unequivocal call to all Papua New Guineans to uphold the rule of law, warning that no amount of justification can validate criminal acts. He has condemned recent incidents of violence, destruction, and illegal roadblocks, stressing that these actions not only endanger lives but also undermine the country's economic and social stability.

"There is no justification for breaking one law in an attempt to seek justice for another crime. Lawlessness does not solve problems—it only deepens them," Prime Minister Marape declared. He highlighted a recent case in Tari, where police, with the support of the local community, successfully arrested a suspect involved in the killing of a police officer. "The perpetrator is now behind bars, and the legal process is underway. This is the correct course of action—justice through the law, not through retaliatory violence," he said. The Prime Minister further condemned those who use criminal behaviour as a means of drawing attention to grievances. "No excuse, no justification can validate committing another crime to protest an existing one. Resorting to violence, destruction, and intimidation does not solve problems—it creates more victims."

Prime Minister Marape took particular aim at the destruction and disorder along the Highlands Highway, warning that such actions jeopardise the very livelihoods of the people involved.

"My government has invested over K2 billion into upgrading the Highlands Highway. This road is a national asset, crucial for economic activities such as agriculture, small businesses, trade, and tourism. Blocking roads, setting vehicles alight, and destroying property is reckless and self-defeating," he said. He noted that innocent citizens, including small business owners, have suffered due to these acts of lawlessness. "I sympathise with the mother from Jiwaka who lost her vehicle due to roadblocks. She is part of the SME sector, trying to sustain her family, yet criminals destroyed her means of earning a living. This government will not ignore genuine grievances such as hers, but those who cause such destruction will face the full force of the law."

The Prime Minister also acknowledged that major trucking companies like Mapai and Trans Wonderland Ltd



Police personnel managing traffic outside New Ireland Provincial Legislative Council Building

have been affected, reinforcing the economic damage caused by these disruptions. "Do not expect the government to provide free education, healthcare, and infrastructure if you destroy the very economy that funds these services," he warned.

Prime Minister Marape called upon local leaders to take a stand against lawlessness, urging councillors, provincial governors, and community elders to actively maintain peace in their respective areas.

"For the first time, my government has placed councillors on the payroll. If you want government support, you must first ensure that your communities are law-abiding. Your role is not to stand idly by while young people engage in reckless behaviour—you must be the voice of authority in your communities," he stated.

He stressed that members of parliament, governors, and local leaders must work together to prevent violence from escalating. "Governors must ensure that peace and mediation teams in their provinces are functioning. If conflicts arise between different provinces, then peace mediation teams must be deployed immediately to resolve disputes before they spiral out of control."

Recognising Papua New Guinea's deep cultural traditions, the Prime Minister called for the restoration of community-based mediation and customary dispute resolution mechanisms.

"In our culture, compensation and mediation play a critical role in resolving disputes. But these processes must be handled within the bounds of the law, led by village councillors,

elders, and local authorities—not by mobs taking the law into their own hands," he said.

He called on local communities to work with police rather than against them. "If a crime has been committed, report it to the police and allow the justice system to function. Do not take matters into your own hands. If the police in your area are slow to act, escalate the issue to their superiors. Justice will be served, but it must be done legally."

Prime Minister Marape reaffirmed his government's commitment to strengthening law enforcement, stating that police operations will intensify across the country to crack down on criminals and bring offenders to justice.

"I have issued a direct instruction to the Police Commissioner to step up enforcement. While resources may sometimes be stretched, I want to assure the people of Papua New Guinea that no crime is ignored. Every case is documented, every offender is pursued, and justice will be done," he assured.

He acknowledged that policing alone is not enough and called for a coordinated effort between law enforcement and community leaders. "Police will arrest offenders, but it is the responsibility of governors, councillors, and local leaders to ensure that peace is maintained within their communities." As Papua New Guinea approaches its 50th year of independence, the Prime Minister urged citizens to act responsibly and reject violence.

"We are not a young nation anymore. We are turning 50, and we must act like a mature country. Lawlessness should not define our future."

PRIME MINISTER MARAPE DEMANDS URGENT REFORMS IN STATE- OWNED ENTERPRISES TO DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Prime Minister James Marape has issued a strong call for urgent reforms in Papua New Guinea's State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), emphasising the need for greater efficiency, self-sustainability, and improved service delivery.

He made these remarks following a high-level meeting on February 18 with State Enterprises Minister William Duma, Kumul Consolidated Holdings Ltd (KCHL) Managing Director Prof. David Kavanamur, and the leadership of key SOEs, including PNG Power Ltd, Water PNG, Telikom PNG, Air Niugini, and Post PNG.

"Whilst acknowledging the leadership of Minister Duma and the progress made in strengthening state enterprises, it is important to recognise that there remains room for greater precaution and continuous improvement. The government remains committed to ensuring transparency, accountability, and the sustainable management of national assets. In this context, ongoing reforms and strategic initiatives will be pursued to enhance efficiency, governance, and long-term viability in key state enterprises," Prime Minister Marape said.

The Prime Minister emphasised the critical role of SOEs in national development and challenged their leadership to break free from a cycle of inefficiency and financial dependence on the government. He made it

clear that underperforming entities must change their approach or face restructuring.

"The operating environment in 2025 is vastly different from that of 1975. At independence, the government had no choice but to carry the burden of public service obligations because there were no alternative sources of revenue. But today, our SOEs must be able to stand on their own feet. We cannot continue to fund inefficiency," he stated.

Prime Minister Marape emphasised that those appointed to lead SOEs must demonstrate the capability to drive profitability and efficiency. He said that board members and CEOs must possess the technical and strategic skills necessary to transform these entities into commercially viable enterprises.

"If you are man enough to be on the board or hold the title of CEO, then you must be man enough to deliver results. The government cannot keep bailing out underperforming companies. We need leadership that will turn things around," he said.

He further urged SOEs to rethink their strategies and leverage their existing advantages, such as monopoly status, to generate revenue and improve services rather than relying on continuous government subsidies.

"If you have a monopoly in a sector and are still struggling financially, then

something is seriously wrong— either with management, operations, or the entire business model. This has to change," he stressed.

Drawing comparisons to international success stories, Prime Minister Marape pointed to Singapore's state-owned enterprises as a model that PNG could learn from.

He highlighted how Singapore, despite lacking natural resources, transformed its SOEs into globally competitive corporations through strong leadership, sound governance, and strategic partnerships.

Prime Minister Marape instructed SOEs to explore innovative financing models such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) agreements, which allow private investors to participate in infrastructure development and operational management while ensuring long-term sustainability.

"We must move away from the traditional reliance on government funding and embrace alternative financing models. PPPs and BOT arrangements can bring in private capital, expertise, and efficiency without burdening the government's budget," he said.

He further urged SOEs to embrace modern technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) and smart systems, to enhance efficiency, cut costs, and improve service delivery.

MAJOR TAX REFORMS TO BOOST INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Prime Minister James Marape has announced a bold tax reform strategy aimed at fostering investment, increasing consumer spending, and driving local industry growth.

The reforms will take effect once Papua New Guinea's economy reaches a K150 billion milestone, a target expected to be achieved within the next three to four years.

He announced this at the Back to Business Breakfast in Port Moresby on February 4.

The Prime Minister emphasised that these changes will create a business-friendly environment, ensuring that economic expansion benefits both investors and citizens.

Prime Minister Marape outlined key tax initiatives that will come into effect once PNG reaches the K150 billion economic threshold:

- Lowering corporate tax to

encourage business expansion and attract further investment.

- Reducing personal income tax to increase disposable income and boost domestic consumption.

- Implementing stricter capital outflow regulations to ensure funds are reinvested locally rather than leaving the country.

"These tax reductions will create the conditions necessary for businesses to thrive, ensuring that investment remains in Papua New Guinea and continues to support employment, infrastructure, and industry growth," said Prime Minister Marape.

To further strengthen PNG's economic position, the government is focusing on Special Economic Zones (SEZs), including a tax-free business hub in Manus Province, designed to attract regional trade, investment, and

industrial development.

"Our vision is to position Manus as a strategic trade hub, opening up new economic opportunities and fostering partnerships with businesses seeking to expand in the Asia-Pacific region," he said.

Prime Minister Marape also called upon leading business organisations, including the PNG Chamber of Commerce, the PNG Business Council, the Manufacturers Council, and the Chamber of Resources and Energy, to collaborate with the government in identifying growth opportunities and shaping investor-friendly policies.

He highlighted import replacement and local manufacturing as key government priorities, urging multinational and domestic firms such as Trukai Industries and those in the food sector to invest in local production to reduce PNG's dependence on imports.

PRIME MINISTER MARAPE STRENGTHENS PNG-AUSTRALIA RELATIONS IN KEY MEETINGS IN SYDNEY

Prime Minister James Marape has reaffirmed the strong and enduring relationship between Papua New Guinea and Australia during a series of successful meetings in Sydney.

In the morning of February 21, Prime Minister Marape paid a courtesy visit to the Australian Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms. Sam Mostyn AC, where they engaged in discussions on the deep historical ties and shared future of both nations.

"I affirmed that our relationship with Australia is a valued and foundational one, dating back to Papua New Guinea's sovereignty in 1975. Since then, Australia has stood with us every step of the way, contributing significantly to our progress over the past 49 years as we approach our 50th anniversary of independence," Prime Minister Marape stated.

Prime Minister Marape acknowledged that Australia's ties with Papua New Guinea extend far beyond 1975, with strong historical, economic, and security cooperation dating back to the colonial era. He emphasised that Australia has been a key partner in PNG's development long before independence and remains committed to its progress today.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister also highlighted ongoing bilateral cooperation and discussed ways to strengthen PNG-Australia relations across key areas, including trade, investment, governance, and security.

A key highlight of the discussion was Prime Minister Marape's invitation to the Governor-General to attend a special 50th-anniversary event in



Prime Minister James Marape and his Australian Counter-part Anthony Albanese at a joint press conference. File pic

Papua New Guinea dedicated to honouring women and girls. This landmark event, scheduled within PNG's 50th-anniversary celebrations (September 16, 2025 – September 15, 2026), will call upon all men and boys in the country to formally recognise and celebrate the contributions of women in Papua New Guinea.

"The Governor-General is a strong advocate for women's rights, with a distinguished background as a businesswoman and community leader, and she has graciously accepted our invitation. She commended PNG on its progress and reiterated Australia's continued commitment to supporting our development and aspirations," he added.

The discussions also reinforced Australia's long-standing support

for PNG's development, spanning infrastructure, education, healthcare, and economic growth. Prime Minister Marape acknowledged the critical role Australia has played—not just during his tenure as Prime Minister, but over the past five decades—in shaping PNG's growth and transformation.

Furthermore, he highlighted PNG's commitment to fostering a favourable environment for Australian investors, ensuring that trade and commerce between the two nations continue to expand and flourish.

"Australia remains PNG's largest trading partner, and our people-to-people ties continue to grow. Our government-to-government relationships, institutional partnerships, and economic cooperation have never been stronger," he said.

BOLD SUPERANNUATION REFORM TO SECURE PAPUA NEW GUINEAN'S FUTURE

Prime Minister James Marape has reaffirmed his government's commitment to strengthening superannuation and voluntary savings for Papua New Guineans, announcing key reforms aimed at ensuring financial security for retirees.

Speaking at the NASFUND FM100 Talkback Show launch on February 10, Prime Minister Marape emphasised the importance of saving for life after active employment and ensuring that citizens are financially secure in their later years.

The Prime Minister noted that too many elderly citizens struggle financially

after having contributed meaningfully to society in their younger years. He said the government is determined to change this by encouraging long-term savings and exploring mechanisms to match voluntary contributions.

Under the proposed policy framework:

- Individuals, including informal sector workers, will be encouraged to contribute to NASFUND.

- The government will explore mechanisms to match contributions, incentivising long-term savings.

- A structured approach to retirement planning will ensure

superannuation funds provide financial security rather than being used for short-term withdrawals.

The Prime Minister stressed that superannuation should not be treated as an ATM for immediate withdrawals but as a sustainable financial resource that guarantees lifelong security.

He also called on businesses, corporate entities, and SMEs to support superannuation contributions for their employees. The government will encourage companies to integrate superannuation planning into employment structures, ensuring workers have financial security beyond their active working years.