



**MINISTRY OF WORKS & HIGHWAYS
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER**



Date: 31st August 2023

File: Media Release

MEDIA RELEASE

Hon. Mirisim: Mendi – Nipa Road Progressing well

Works and Implementation Minister Hon. Solan Mirisim has called on leaders in Southern Highlands to put aside their differences and work together to ensure infrastructure projects undertaken by the National Government in the province are delivered on schedule.

A number of road projects under the CONNECT PNG program is being carried out in the province, but their progress has been threatened by political infighting and constant harassment by people with political affiliations.

“The CONNECT PNG program is a well-planned infrastructure development program that is a game changer. It will open up the country, and drive growth in our non-resources sector of the economy as we move away from dependence on the resource sector.

“Infrastructure like roads and wharves and important enablers of economic growth and social change. They must be carefully planned, costed and developed and that is what we are doing.”

Mr Mirisim said social media allegations that the CONNECT PNG program was a huge scam designed to divert public funds into pockets of politically connected people were simply baseless claims made to score political points.

“I can understand that where projects are being carried out in political volatile provinces like Southern Highlands, baseless accusations can be thrown out in public to paint a bad picture of the program.

“I would urge caution amongst leaders. Leave your politics aside and work together. The National Government has invested a lot of taxpayer money in this program and it must be supported so the people get the benefits intended.”

Minister Mirisim noted criticism made in the media regarding the progress of the Mendi – Nipa portion of the Highlands Highway by Nipa-Kutubu MP Hon. Dr Billy Joseph.

Dr Joseph had alleged that K90 million has been paid to contractor Construct Oceanic Ltd with no progress made, with the project time almost lapsing.

“The allegations raised by the Member are not true. So far the contractor has been paid K65 million for work done in accordance with contract.

“The contract was signed in July 2021. At least 7 months was spent on design, survey and geotech work.

“Mobilization and camp set up was undertaken in Feb 2022. But almost 6 months of contract time was lost because of election related violence and other disruptions.

“There has been significant progress made since, including 6km of resealing works from Kiburu. The sealing of the unsealed section from Tepe – Parita Junction to set to start soon

“The contractor is employing over 1,000 locals in the area, and utilizing local SMEs for supplies like fuel and food, satisfying the local content of the contract.

“We have given an extension to make up for the time lost as a result of disruptions caused by the elections and other disagreements. We are confident of this contract being delivered within the new time schedule,” Minister Mirisim said.

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