

Masalai i tokaut

Number Twelve: 14 October 2002

Government ready to grant new illegal logging permits

The government has given a clear signal of its intention to grant three new illegal logging permits in Western and West Sepik Provinces.

This is clear evidence of the governments close allegiance to the corrupt logging industry and blows away any notions that they are committed to improving governance and fighting against the mismanagement of natural resources.

The three new permits will go to the three largest logging companies in PNG as part of the secret deal brokered by the Managing Director in Malaysia two weeks ago.

The Government of Sir Michael Somare has lost no time in carving secret deals with PNGs corrupt logging industry to allow access into the country's last remaining forest resources.

The Minister of Forests has issued a summons to the National Forest Board to meet on the 25th of October to consider the allocation of East Awin, Amanab Blocks 1-4 and the documentation for Kamula Doso (*see document below*).

The Government, buoyed by the potential of both financial support from Taiwan and a new deal with the Australian government that could see the return of Mekere Morauta as Finance Minister, has decided that it does not need to follow the law in granting new forest concessions.

Although the new permits will be a direct breach of the loan agreement between the government and the World Bank and will be contrary to the recommendations of the Australian funded Independent Forestry Review, the government believes that it has nothing to lose as it has already been told by both the Bank and the European Union that they will not give any budget support this year.

The new permits will be illegal because of a whole catalogue of fundamental legal breaches. The permits are not based on the informed consent of the local landowners, have not been developed in accordance with any valid National Forest plan, have not followed correct procedures and, in defiance of our Constitution, they will not be logged sustainably.

The speed with which the government has put itself into the hands of the logging industry is in stark contrast to the new Prime Ministers rhetoric when he was in opposition. Sir Somare labelled the government of Mekere Morauta as the most corrupt ever for its illegal logging deals and in particular the failure to deal with the illegal Kiunga Aiambak logging project.

However, since coming to power, the new government has itself done nothing to stop the illegal logging at Kiunga Aiambak and has installed a strong logging man, Mark Maipakai, as the Minister for Justice alongside Concord Pacific's ex-lawyer, Attorney General, Francis Damen.

The Somare government has also been happy to endorse the illegal appointment of David Nelson as the Managing Director of the Forest Authority and it has taken no action to implement the recent Ombudsman Commission recommendation that the Chair of the National Forest Board, Wari Iamo, be removed for his involvement in the Kamula Doso scandal.

It has taken only a few months for the new government to lose all credibility as a government that is committed to the fight against corruption and the need to clean up mismanagement. And once again it is the logging industry that is going to drag our Nation further into a crisis of governance.

INDEPENDENT STATE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

FORESTRY ACT 1991

Act. Sec. 16(4)
Reg. 19

FORM 17

**REQUEST BY MINISTER TO *CHAIRMAN/DEPUTY CHAIRMAN
OF THE BOARD TO CONVENE A MEETING OF THE BOARD**

To: Chairman

Pursuant to Section 16(4) of the Forestry Act, 1991 I hereby request that you convene a meeting of the Board within 14 days of the date of receipt of this request to consider and advise me on those matters as set out below.

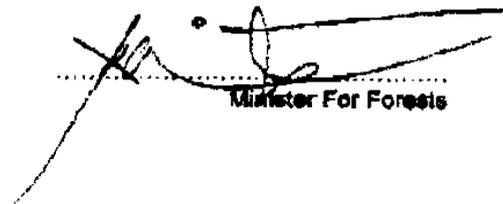
Matters:

To convene a special board meeting of consider allocation of the following timber projects:

- a) East Awin Timber Project - Western Province
- b) Amanab Blocks 1-4 - Sandaun Province
- c) FMA documentation relating to Kamula Doso Project

Dated this 10th day of October, 2002.




Minister For Forests

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Site Counter