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For Immediate Release

MEDIA STATEMENT

Bougainville Update

The State of Emergency in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville is now into its eleventh week of the emergency period.

SOE Controller and Chief of Bougainville Police Service, Francis Tokura, says the current state of emergency is scheduled to lapse on June 14, 2020. The Bougainville House of Representatives will resume on June 09, 2020 to decide if there will be a further extension of the SOE.

The Controller says so far he has issued three emergency orders which include seven supplementary orders.

These supplementary orders cover the resumption of schools, resumption of work for the Bougainville Public Service, extension of business operating hours, opening of selected food bars, restaurants and bakeries, resumption of fortnightly flights by Air Niugini and PNG Air into Bougainville and the ABG 2020 General Elections.

While the orders on flights into Bougainville have been relaxed, there is still a high number of Bougainvilleans who are stranded in Port Moresby and other provinces eagerly waiting to return home. The Controller says they have been in discussions with airline operator, Air Niugini, to work out an arrangement for special flights to reduce the back log of stranded passengers into Bougainville.

Meantime, the Controller has appealed to the general public in Bougainville to continue to work together with the health officials and law enforcement agencies to ensure the orders on social distancing is maintained at all times.

Health Update

The Suhin Isolation Centre was officially opened on May 27th 2020 by the ABG Vice President. This isolation facility will accommodate patients who test positive for the COVID-19 if the virus enters our borders.

The Suhin Isolation facility upgrade included renovations to the building itself and now have a total of eight rooms with an outdoor kitchen area, backup power, perimeter fencing and ablution blocks. The facility upgrade and maintenance was done at a cost of K600,000 and supported by the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Bougainville.

While Bougainville currently has no confirmed case of COVID-19, the establishment of the Suhin Isolation facility ensures that Bougainville is prepared to deal with any possible confirmed cases in the region.

The Health Secretary also said that since the resumption of flights into Bougainville, more than 24 people have been quarantined at the quarantine facilities in Buka. The Bougainville Health Response Team continues to do daily monitoring and surveillance at all regions with samples being collected and sent for testing. A total of 87 sample results are yet to be received from the PNG Institute of Medical Research.

The Health Secretary further cautioned the public to ensure that they continue to follow the preventive measures being disseminated by health officials.

In South Bougainville, the Bolave Community Health Post also received timely support from the ABG Department of Health to facilitate the completion of its health post facility.

A total of K50,000 was presented by the Health Secretary, Clement Totavun, to the contractor. This upgrade will see the Bolave Community Health Post become a level two health post

The Health Secretary said this is part of their infrastructure plan to improve hospitals and health facilities across Bougainville.

CALLS TO ACTION

Share the correct information amongst your families and communities, and if you want more information, see your local community health worker, or call the Bougainville Health Response Team Hotline free-call number 74460830.

And finally, remember to practice the Five Preventive Measures at all times:

- Maintaining social distance (a minimum of 1.5 meters)
- Frequently washing hands using clean running water and soap, or alcohol-based hand rub
- When coughing and sneezing, cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue — throw away used tissue immediately and wash hands
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough
- If you have fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, stay at home (self-isolate) to protect others and call the Bougainville Health Response Team Hotline Number 74460830.

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