



PM: peace vital for our nation

THE need to sustain peace is important for the betterment and advancement of any society, says Prime Minister Rick Hou.

Speaking during the launching of the launching of the new peace-building programme, the Prime Minister emphasized the need for peace and stability amongst citizens and leaders of this country.

"Without peace, development cannot take place. Without peace, children cannot go to school. Without peace we cannot realize our full potentials, and without peace, our aspirations will remain dreams," he said.

The Prime Minister added that the nexus of peace and development, therefore, cannot be ex-

generated.

"We need peace in order to have optimal and sustainable development. The inverse is equally true in that we have to have development in order to have peace in our communities throughout the country," he said.

However, Prime Minister Hou said development is not just about achieving and sustaining a high economic growth rate.

"It is not only about employment opportunities, or strong per capita incomes. It is also about engineering a development pathway that will allow growth to take place but, at the same time, for people in our far-flung villages and communities to be empowered. It is about creating the enabling environ-

ment, a development pathway that empowers women and youth, harness comparative advantages in their localities. It is about remaining engaged and having the feeling of worth and a sense of making a contribution to the welfare and betterment of the country as a whole," he said.

The Prime Minister has also appealed for unity amongst all our people and all public officers.

"I appeal for everyone to work together to make a peaceful future for our country. You are all the leaders of this country. Sometimes, it falls upon a generation to be great. We can be that generation," he said.

— PM Press

Police recover stolen money

POLICE in Gizo, Western Province (WP) have recovered cash of \$243,100 and some personal properties owned by Pacific Crest Company at their operation on Ranogga Island on 27 February 2018.

Police have arrested a 33-year-old man allegedly involved in stealing the cash and personal properties.

Provincial Police Commander (PPC), Western Province, Chief Superintendent Mathias Lemialu says, "a man allegedly involved in the incident was arrested by my investigators and formally charged with three counts of Simple Larceny and released on bail to appear in the Gizo Magistrate Court on 26 March 2018."

"I want to thank the people who helped the police in their investigation which led to the successful recovery of the large amount of money and the valuable properties," says PPC Lemialu.

Chief Superintendent Lemialu adds, "The successful recovery of the alleged stolen money and properties was as a result of collaboration between the police and the community to deal with crime."

He says, "I appeal for such partnership from members of the communities in Western Province with the police to deal with crime to make sure our homes and business houses are safe."

— Source/Police Media

Matanga explains police process on suspects

By ASSUMPTA BUCHANAN
SUPERVISING Police Commissioner Juanita Matanga says hunting down accused persons who are under warrant of arrest in other countries can be done depending on the case.

Ms Matanga made the response when asked if the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force can use its connections through the INTERPOL to hunt down accused persons who went overseas and never return to the country to face their charges.

"We have partnerships with other law enforcement agencies," Ms Matanga said.

She also added they also have other mechanisms but it depend very much on the case.

"We also look at the cost of it as well.

"Is it really cost effective for us to do that?"

"These are the things we have to consider.

"But we will work closely with court to ensure we support the court's work."

She also added that the warrant of arrest issued will remain to be effective until the accused person returns to the country.

"That is when we will deal with the warrant of issue," Ms Matanga said.

Ms Matanga's comments came following the disappearance of an Asian, Ting Kwong Hing, almost a year after he was given leave to travel to Australia on 6 July last year.

Fraud case sets for trial in April

By ASSUMPTA BUCHANAN

THE case of the former government officer accused of obtaining more than \$800,000 of public funds through dishonest tender process continues to come before the court for interim mentions.

This is leading up to the trial of Stephen Jude Oto's that was fixed early last month for 30 April 2018 through to 6 June 2018.

The latest interim mention date was yesterday and the next one will be on March 30.

Oto is facing 11 counts of official corruption.

He was the first public officer to have been arrested by Taskforce Janus, a partnership between the Ministry of Police and Ministry of Finance, set up specif-

cally to target fraud within the public service.

At the time of his arrest, Oto was the Financial Controller within the Ministry of Police and Correctional Services as well as a member of the Ministry's Tender Board.

Oto was charged after the Ministry of Finance and Treasury lodged a complaint with the Police.

The prosecution alleged that on 26 March 2015, Oto was appointed as a member of the Ministry of Police National Security and Correctional Services Ministerial Tender Board.

A requirement of this appointment was that he familiarise himself with the processes set out in the Solomon Islands Financial Instructions.

It was alleged that be-

tween 1 December 2015 and 18 August 2016, Jahman Enterprises, a company Oto allegedly set up and owned, answered calls for tenders and had been awarded business contracts for service to the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services on 11 different occasions.

A number of these transactions have required Certificate of Registration of Business name from the Company Haus to be submitted together with the tender.

Police alleged Oto, on a number of occasions, supplied a falsified Certificate of Registration of Business name, removing his own name from this certificate and replacing it with the name Edward Laufoava, to conceal his identity.

His business Jahman Enterprises was alleged to have subsequently invoiced the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services, which had made payments totalling up to \$817,256.50 to Jahman Enterprises for these services.

Police further alleged that those payments were also made into an account which Oto is the sole signatory.

On a number of occasions, Oto had certified requestions as the Accountable Officer and on occasions, had allegedly certified that goods and services had been received.

Amos Ngalingert of L & L Lawyers is representing Oto while Public Prosecutor Florence Joel appears for the Crown.