



TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL (PNG) Inc.
5th Floor Mogoru Moto Building, Champion Parade
PO Box 591 Port Moresby, NCD Phone 320 2188 Fax 320 189
E-mail: tipng@daltron.com.pg
Website: www.transparencypng.org.pg

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Press release

TIPNG: Minister make stand clear, Business or People

Transparency International PNG Inc (TIPNG) is questioning Forest Minister Mr Belden Namah Guinea whether he wants to be a businessman or a representative of the people and country in his capacity as MP and Minister.

This call is made in light of recent reports by the PNG and Samoan media organisations of his reported purchasing of prime property worth millions of kina in the Samoan capital Apia.

According to the Samoan Observer, Mr Namah's Samoan lawyer Siaki Tuala confirmed early this week that a venerable company, Chan Chiu Co Ltd, was bought for more than S\$2 million by Mr Namah. This was in addition to other properties purchased on his shopping spree.

Chairman of TI PNG Peter Aitsi said: "It is not unreasonable for the public to demand from the minister an explanation how he has paid for this property and as reported paid a deposit on another. If there is nothing to hide TI calls on the minister given his role in government to declare his business activities to the Ombudsman Commission and allow the Ombudsman full access to review and vet the transaction"

Considering the substantial amounts of money used for the reported property buys and the minister's involvement of facilitating the purchases, TIPNG wants the minister to clarify whether he wants to be a businessman or representative of the people in Parliament.

TIPNG says that as an MP, Mr Namah should be careful not to invite accusations of conflict of interest in his role. The anti-corruption watchdog insists that politicians should forego direct commercial dealings while serving in Parliament to ensure they do not leave themselves or their office open to criticism or be placed in a situations that may compromise their public office. To do otherwise would suggest politicians are not interested in maintaining the levels of integrity that are a requirement of their office.

TIPNG says if Mr Namah wants to facilitate business for his overseas partners he should stick to business and leave the task of representing the peoples' interest to persons who will be committed to delivering services to the people.

TIPNG says Mr Namah as a member of parliament and specifically as a member of the NEC his principle responsibility should be to the people of Papua New Guinea and he should not put his own personal business interests before that of his constituents and the country as a whole.

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