

15<sup>th</sup> June 2005

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **PHILEMON WARNS AGAINST ATTACKS ON DISTRICT TREASURIES**

FINANCE and Treasury Minister Hon. Bart Philemon has warned criminal elements against attacks on the newly introduced district treasury offices in the provinces.

He also appealed to people in the respective districts to treasure and take good care of these services, which had been introduced for their benefit and convenience.

Mr Philemon said he was disturbed to read in one of the newspapers yesterday views by an unnamed police source that treasury offices would be easy targets for criminal elements, and that one had been already broken into a number of times.

"While I cannot discount the fact that the potential for criminal attacks is ever-present, as has been the experience at government and private institutions, property and even for individual citizens, it is unprofessional and unbecoming for a member of the police force to raise unnecessary alarm through a public news medium," Mr Philemon said.

"Such concerns should be referred through proper channels to the authorities concerned so that they are addressed, in this case through the hierarchy of the Police and Finance departments.

"I must, however, stress that the district treasury concept, which has been already been introduced in a number of provinces, has the full support and involvement of the Government, including the law enforcement agencies.

"Even the respective provincial governors, provincial and district administrations and the people give their full backing for government services such as treasury and financial services, which had been non-existent for the last 25-30 years, to be returned to the provinces.

"Treasury and financial services are only the first of many government services to follow. Banking and postal services are being introduced and so will telecommunications, electricity, education, health, roads and bridges infrastructure services.

"At the same time strong police, magisterial and judicial and correctional service presence will be catered for and introduced under what will be known as the District Services Improvement Program (DSIP). I anticipate funding for all of these programs to be catered for in the 2006 National Budget.

"A committee comprising heads of all of these relevant departments has held meetings and will be making a joint submission to the National Executive Council outlining the respective requirements for funding.

For example, to cater for security concerns in the districts, including for the various services such as the treasury, banking and postal services, police presence will be beefed up to a level adequate enough to counter and deal with any threats of criminal nature.

"The Police Commissioner, Mr. Sam Inguba, has agreed for the permanent deployment of 10 police personnel for each district under the DSIP.

"We will also have resident magistrates in the districts and build rural lock-ups so that law enforcement is swift and effective, and delivered at local level.

"In Morobe Province, which the unnamed police source makes reference to, the Governor Mr. Luther Wenge, and the provincial administration, issued the strongest warnings during the treasury openings in all the nine districts that police will deal firmly with criminals who attacked government services and public servants. Those who ignore such warnings would be plain foolish.

"I also urge the community at large in all districts throughout the country to take ownership of these vital services and make it work for them in order that their own livelihoods may be advanced."

**HON. BART PHILEMON, MP**  
Minister