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Guns unchecked

Policemen sell, 'lease out' own and confiscated firearms

INTERNAL Security Minister Bire Kimisopa yesterday admitted police cannot effectively monitor gun smuggling — even by their own members.

Responding to concerns raised by Sandaun Governor Carlos Yuni in Parliament about gun smuggling and the constabulary's non-performance and low working conditions, the Goroka MP said it was a "known fact" officers from the Correctional Service (CS), RPNGC and the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) "leased" their guns and sold confiscated weapons.

He said all the issues relating to gunrunning would be discussed at a gun summit to be held in June in Goroka and that AusAID and the PNG Government together contributed K1 million to fund programs aimed at stopping gun smuggling. The money would be channelled to a committee chaired by former PNGDF commander General (retired) Jerry Singirok and assisted by former parliamentarian Sir Barry Holloway.

"When we come to Goroka in June, we will decide precisely the course of action this country needs to take so that we can rein in this abuse in unlicensed firearms.

"We have a long history of gun-running because of our strategic location and also because of the border that we share with Indonesia and Australia," Mr Kimisopa said.

Telling Parliament the gun summit would result in the formulation of a strategic plan to include a sectoral approach to rid the country of the problem, the minister said inventory control would be stepped up in all disciplinary forces.

By ALEX RHEENEY

"What needs to be done at the airports will be done, what needs to be done on borders must be done, what needs to be done in terms of inventory control in the CS, defence and police must also be done," Mr Kimisopa said.

Mr Yuni appealed to the minister and the Police Commissioner to get police to do foot patrols at night in the country's urban centres.

But Mr Kimisopa said police numbers were still insufficient to enable them to do roadblocks and foot patrols.

This compelled him to embark on a campaign to integrate provincial policing with the help of provincial governments, which would ultimately result in the national and provincial governments sharing costs.

"The functions of policing in the province or anywhere in this country are not the prime responsibility of the PNG Government.

"It must be shared simply because the people who are affected are from your respective provinces," Mr Kimisopa said and indicated he intended to tour all provinces and inform governors and law and order committees of the program.

On Mr Yuni's queries on a six-month gun amnesty for the return of unlicensed firearms, the Goroka MP said it would be discussed at the gun summit.

Mr Kimisopa told Parliament the RPNGC were given a 10 per cent increase in their salaries in the last two years with a possibility of another 4 per cent and the Government was committed to improving their working conditions.



High in the sky

ON HIGH: Young men at Samo village on Lihir Island in New Ireland province are getting skillful at building houses off the ground. Their latest creation is one found nowhere else on the island. This tree house is just a short distance from Samo community school. It was built by the Kele boys, Elias and Ronnie with help from the other youths from Samo One village. For young men more used to building communal men-only "haus bois", this latest creation is certainly an eye catcher. **Picture by PATRICK LEVO.**

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