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# Forest grab

## Govt proposes radical changes to law

By ALEX RHEENEY

**RESOURCE owners and provincial governments stand to lose out with new Forestry Act amendments proposed by the Government.**

The Papua New Guinea Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the PNG Eco-Forestry Forum could also lose their membership on the National Forest Board (NFB) in changes to Section 10 of the Act. The amendments, if approved, would see the Forest Industries Association (FIA), "one member from a community involved in logging activities", and "the minister's nominee" take their seats.

Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare gave notice in Parliament yesterday of the Government's intention to table the controversial changes to the Act.

A copy of the Bill obtained by the *Post-Courier* showed amendments and repeals being proposed for various sections of the Forestry Act 1991, ranging from sections 2 (interpretation) to 137 (saving of existing permits etc). The Forest Act 1991 was gazetted in 1992, tightening controls in the acquisition and allocation of forests for development. It was the direct result of the 1989 Barnett Commission of Inquiry into the timber industry which found that there was total disregard for logging practices resulting in irreparable damage to forests.

The PNG Eco-Forestry Forum has slammed the move and warned the amendments, if passed could return the country to the 1980s when uncontrolled illegal logging was rampant. **(report on Page 2).**

There are concerns the proposed amendments go against the spirit of the 1995 Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Governments, which granted powers to provincial authorities to determine their forest policies.

Proposed amendments to sections 25 and 30 of the Act would see the NFB having powers to suspend provincial forest management committees (PFMC) and the latter lose its power to approve the extension, renewal and transfer of timber authorities. The PFMC is made up of a senior provincial government official, forestry officer, LLG representative, two landowner group representatives and one environmental group representative.

The proposed repeal of Section 59 would revoke mandatory consultations the NFB is supposed to have with customary landowners and provincial governments — parties to a forest management agreement with the National Forest Authority (NFA).

Forestry observers are sceptical about the true intentions of the amendments and say the timber industry is heading towards the path taken by the PNG fisheries sector — where all fishing licences are issued by the National Fisheries Board in Port Moresby without consultation with provincial governments and affected communities.



**CONJOINED:** The Siamese twins being checked after birth yesterday at the Buka General Hospital. The pair are joined at the groin.

A MOTHER of seven from North Bougainville gave birth to healthy full term Siamese twins at the Buka General Hospital yesterday.

Reports from the hospital say the Siamese twins are joined at the umbilical cord, and have one anal opening but two buttocks. The twins have a set of feet each but are conjoined at the groin.

The twins were born under the watchful eyes of Dr Joe Vilosi at about 12.30pm yesterday. Dr Vilosi also delivered Buka's other Siamese twins, the Bossin girls from the Solos area of Buka who shared the same bladder and were separated in Australia.

The twins born yesterday are

## It's Siamese twins No.2!

from Suir in the Tinputz district and are in good health. Dr Vilosi, who also comes from Suir, said the twins had two separate chests with different sets of lungs and two separate cardio-vascular systems.

They also have separate heads. These organs were operating independently and seemed normal, Dr Vilosi said.

He said the twins weighed 5.9kg at birth and confirmed all

heart functions and other vital organs were normal. The twins have only one anal opening and have no female or male genitals.

This is the second case of Siamese twins born at the Buka General Hospital.

Dr Vilosi said the twins would need extensive surgery to separate them. Such operations are not available in the country.

He appealed to donor agencies, including Rotary International, to take the case under their wings as it did with the Bossin twins about 10 years ago.

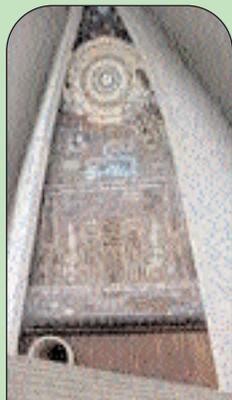
**Words, picture by ROMALUS MASIU**

**PNG SAILOR FOUND DEAD IN CHINA**

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**CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL ROBBED**

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**PUSH TO REDUCE NATIONAL DEBT**

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