



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Post-Courier

Since 1969 No. 9565

Monday, November 26, 2006

Airfreight K1.50, Port Moresby edition K1.00

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Highlands Highway collapses

STRANDED: Services to most parts of the Highlands region have been cut off after a section of the Okuk (Highlands) Highway in Chimbu Province was completely washed away. Heavy rain last Thursday night caused a creek near the border of Western Highland and Chimbu at Don Bosco to flood and wash away a section of the road. About 50 metres of the road had been washed out and passengers and trucking companies have been stranded since last week. Passengers are transiting at the site while locals make some income for themselves by carrying cargo to either side of the road (inset)

Picture: NIKINTS TIPTIP



MPs try new trick

Lawmakers hold budget to ransom!

By ALEX RHEENEY

IRATE parliamentarians are threatening to block the passage of the 2007 Budget if their district grants are not released.

The MPs – a majority of them Government backbenchers – revolted in the Parliament lobby last week.

This forced Forest Minister and leader of government business Patrick Pruaitch to defer voting on the Government's money-plan to

today. The grants in question include K900,000 for the district services improvement program (DSIP) which the Government had catered for in its August supplementary budget, as well as constitutional grants from previous programs such as the district development program (DDP). It is understood most Open MPs have yet to submit their acquittals for the last allocation of the DSG, which is a requirement under the Public Finance Management Act. This has led to the Department of National

Planning and Monitoring withholding electoral grants and Finance and Planning Minister John Hickey being subject to a barrage of criticism by MPs.

A Government spokesperson yesterday said only 39 parliamentarians had submitted their acquittals and the 50 who did not will only receive half their districts' electoral grants – and will get the balance when they submit the full acquittal report.

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