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PRESS RELEASE

Bilimoia Landowner Association Leaders Reconcile

Two opposing leaders of the Bilimoia Landowners Association (BLA) of the K92 Mining Project, have reconciled with each other in the interest and benefit of their people.

Former Chairman of the association Neneti Tesai, and the incumbent Johnson Urinke, on Wednesday April 18, put their differences aside in a reconciliation ceremony, which took place at Bilimoia village, Kainantu District, Eastern Highlands Province.

Mr Tesai and Mr Urinke have been at logger heads for five years, over the position of chairmanship of the association. This leadership tussle has over the years, resulted in the destabilization of progress on issues pertaining to mine derived benefits and other issues.

The issues that have needed leadership attention and progress include:

1. 10% of royalty that is supposed to be released to the local SDA mission as tithe.
2. Various disputes between the different clans
3. Internal court battles
4. Observation of the Sabbath faith

The two leaders apologized to their people and to each other, and signed a peace agreement between themselves to signify their commitment to work together going forward. They acknowledged that their issue had stalled their people's progress, and undertook to withdraw court cases against each other in the interest of their people's progress and development.

The Mineral Resources Authority (MRA) intervened in the five years long dispute between the two leaders, and facilitated the ceremony. The authority made available K200, 000 to the association. Out of this amount, K100, 000 was spent on organising the ceremony. The other K100, 000 will go towards organising the landowners in preparation for stakeholder meetings going forward.

The Executive Manager for the Development Coordination Division of the MRA Andrew Gunua, said that the MRA as the regulator of the mining industry was happy that the two leaders had come to a compromise for the good of their own people. He said the MRA's financial support and presence at the ceremony signified the government's support and commitment to the landowners and for the project.

The reconciliation ceremony was witnessed by representatives from the Eastern Highlands Provincial Government, K92 Mining Limited, Kainantu District Administration and all ten clans of the Bilimoia Association.



Photo: Executive Manger DCD Mr. Andrew Gunua (left), leaders of Bilimoia Landowners Association (BLA) (middle) and Acting legal Manager Ms. Sharon Haihavu (right)