

Assembly grateful of Mercy's medical services

THE Motu Koita Assembly (MKA) has expressed great appreciation for the free-of-charge medical services provided by the visiting United States navy hospital ship, USNS Mercy in Port Moresby from Aug 4 to 8.

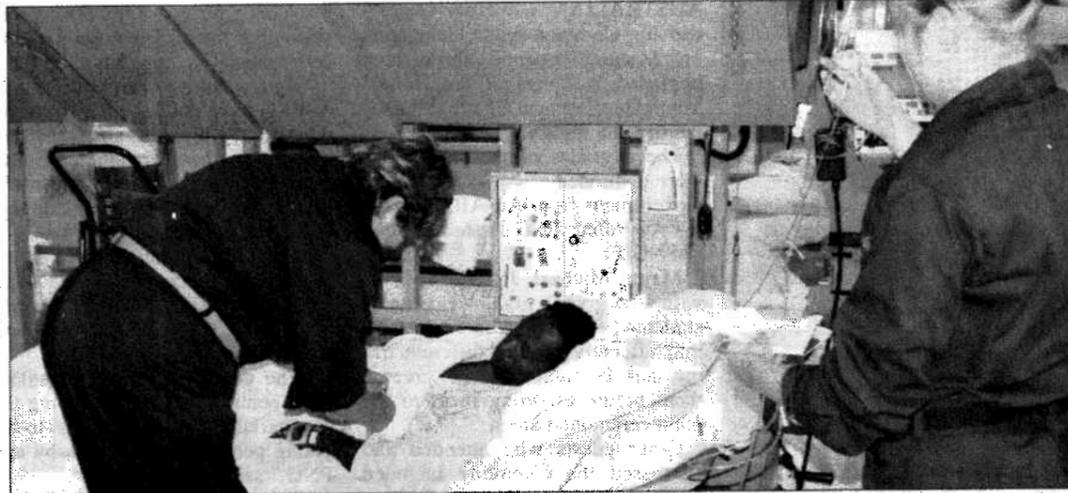
Assembly President Hon Miria Ikupu said many people including those from Motu Koita villages were grateful of receiving medical treatment including undergoing surgery, dental treatment and others.

"On behalf of the Motu Koita people, I sincerely thank the medical staff and crew of USNS Mercy for providing very important and in some cases life-saving treatment at no cost at all to the recipients.

"Some of the surgical operations and medical treatment given to the people were life saving for many who could not afford such first class treatment because of the huge medical expenses both within PNG and abroad.

"The large number of people who lined up seeking medical treatment from USNS Mercy during the whole week in an indicative of the fact that PNG's current health services are appalling and need urgent government attention.

"I salute the commanding officer of USNS Mercy, all the doctors, nurses and other medical staff together with all local volunteers who assisted in one way or another



A patient being treated on the ship.

to providing very important medical service to our people at Hanuabada, Elevala, Gabi, Tatana, Baruni, Pari and Gaire in Central province and other Motu Koita villages within and outside the city boundary," Mr Ikupu said.

He also thanked the United States government and the US ambassador to PNG for including Papua New Guinea, particularly Port Moresby under the 2008 Pacific Partnership Medical Mission programme.

Meanwhile, Mr Ikupu has challenged the British and Australian Governments, as former colonial administrators of PNG to consider

similar programmes, but in education and infrastructure sectors.

"I call on the British and Australian governments to seriously consider engaging their service personnel and others to provide for civil projects, water and sewerage, community projects, teachers, building educational institutions as well as in road and other infrastructure projects.

"Whilst we appreciate their contributions in the past, as former colonial administrators, the British and Australian governments should consider shifting away from just providing donor funds and budget-

ary support to the PNG government.

"Instead the two governments should fund and engage their own citizens and companies to come to PNG provide such services.

"By adopting this method, funds allocate for designated projects will actually be spent on them resulting in tangible development which the taxpayers of donor nations will be proud of," he said.

Mr Ikupu said his suggestion was in view of PNG being increasingly perceived as a country with very poor governance record ravaged by crime and corruption.

Digicel launches mobile music roadshow

DIGICEL PNG has launched its first nationwide Mobile Music Roadshow to celebrate its 1st year anniversary in PNG last weekend.

Digicel, in partnership with Total Events PNG, Yumi and Nau FM Radio, took to the streets of Port Moresby last Friday and Saturday with a special birthday mobile music roadshow offering fun and entertainment for young and old at its Digicel Flagship outlets.

The birthday mobile music roadshows will hit the streets of Lae, Mt Hagen and Kokopo starting next Saturday, August 9th and will continue the following Saturday, August 16th.

Digicel staff were entertained by a surprise visit last Friday, on the Digicel office premises, by the special Mobile Music Roadshow as it kicked off its activities in Port Moresby city. The staff got a taste of the birthday celebrations and were treated on live clown acts, karaoke, music and dancing, live radio cross overs with Yumi and Nau FM and a special staff raffle to top the celebrations off.

Digicel PNG CEO, John Mangos, said of the event: "Digicel says a big thank you to all its customers across the nation for joining the Bigger, Better Network and would like to celebrate its 1st birthday in PNG with all of you. For the occasion we have a special Mobile Music Roadshow visiting our Flagship outlets in Port Moresby, Lae, Mt Hagen and Kokopo. We have also extended our special 1st year anniversary promotion to all our valued customers with SMS for only 12 toea. We hope you join in our celebrations and continue to enjoy our lowest call rates and innovative services."

Since launching in Papua New Guinea on 20 July, 2007 Digicel has introduced cutting edge technology and services to its customers in PNG including CreditMe/CreditU, local and international Call Me, DigiINFO, WebFLEX and the latest addition, the new postpaid business packages, bringing even greater value to the customer.

'More accountability needed to address AIDS'

IT'S THE third morning of the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City and the Honorable Francesca Semoso, Deputy-Speaker of Parliament for Bougainville, is sitting on a mat at the Pacific Meeting House, yet her passion and desire to make a difference in the midst of discrimination and human rights abuses are such she can barely stay still.

"It is my right to be gay, or lesbian, or to enjoy same sex marriage, everywhere in the Pacific," she declared. "Similarly, we need to educate our youth to be responsible and practice safe sex, rather than tell them 'no' and shun them."

"Being judgmental, and curtailing discussions about sex and sexual health, is simply not helpful."

As the chairperson of Bougainville's Parliamentary Committee on HIV and AIDS, the Honorable Semoso is attending the conference in Mexico City to advocate for more accountability from leaders who made a commitment to address HIV.

She says this commitment includes upholding the right of sex workers and men who have sex with men to access health services and prevention programs without being stigmatized by health workers. It also includes the right of all women, married or single, to say no to unwanted sex.

"If we can address domestic violence women's human rights in the region, we'll be much closer to

addressing HIV successfully," she said.

The Honorable Semoso argued that Pacific societies need to examine their cultures and pull together the positive aspects as a collectivity, then add what works at a global level.

Meanwhile, for the first time since the biennial International AIDS Conferences began, a plenary on sex between men was presented this year.

During the plenary, Dr. Saavedra, head of the National AIDS Programme in Mexico, said that in most countries, men who have sex with men have higher prevalence rates of HIV than other groups. But only 31 percent of countries had

reported separate data for this group, according to UNAIDS.

"Every time we do prevalence studies among men who have sex with men, we get the same, consistent results. The best way of denying this reality is to not look at these results, to not do any research at all on this population, or simply, to not believe the scientific evidence," said Dr. Saavedra.

Yet, Dr. Saavedra argued that the most important step towards ending the stigmatization of men who have sex with men is to talk about it.

"It is necessary to say it aloud, to speak openly about it, because if people keep denying this reality, it will be very difficult to work with these men to prevent AIDS."

part of the community's ongoing disci-
Commander Inspector Robert Kruel
the west
to be in the streets