

**High Commission of India  
Port Moresby**

**Press Release**

Dr. A.M. Gondane, High Commissioner of India visited the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB) from February 20-22, 2013. This was the first visit from the Indian Mission to the ARB. During his visit, he held constructive meetings and discussions with several important stakeholders in the ARB.

The High Commissioner was hosted at a Breakfast Meeting at Kuri Resort where several members of the Government of ARB including Regional Member of Parliament Hon'ble Joe Lera, Hon'ble Ministers of Agriculture, Education, Community Development and officials of various Departments were present. Discussions centred on Agriculture & Education development and possible Indian assistance in this regard. He also met Minister for Works and Acting President of ABG Hon'ble Carlos Ketdimur. He held a separate meeting with Minister for Local Government Rev. Nope, along with officers of the Department of Community Development, Council of Elders (COE) members and was apprised of the budgeting and implementation of decisions taken by the Council of Elders. He briefed them on the administrative structure of local self Government in Indian districts/villages.

The High Commissioner also addressed the meeting of Executive Managers of the Planning Department at Tsiroge, Northern Bougainville where he elaborated on the planning process in India. He also assured the group that India could host some officials under the ITEC programme for training in preparing district plans. He also addressed a group of businesspersons at the Business Centre in Protocol Office. He elaborated on the possibility of increased trade between India and PNG, especially the ARB. He stressed that business leaders should not focus exclusively on natural resources development but look for other areas like tourism/hospitality, skills development, garments manufacture, trading in value added goods, etc. to widen the economic activity. They should also take advantage of the duty free access to goods in India and develop linkages for accessibility with other countries in the region. He also met "Women in Business" representatives and spoke of empowerment of women in India at the grassroots level and how women were coming to the forefront by entrepreneurship in non-traditional industries like the cosmetic/beauty industry, micro banking, IT, call centres, etc. The women leaders requested the High

Commissioner to address a separate workshop in the area of women development. He promised to do so during his next visit to Bougainville.

At the dinner hosted in his honour by Hon'ble Joe Lera, Regional Member and Mr. Alito Atoi, open Member of Parliament from North Bougainville, High Commissioner thanked the hosts for a wonderful programme chalked out for him and promised to consider requests for specific project assistance in addition to training of personnel in various fields.

The High Commissioner also held media interaction with Radio Bougainville and Radio New Dawn alongwith other press members during his arrival and departure. The interview was broadcast over local radio stations.

**Port Moresby, February 25, 2013**