Battle for PNG’s PM post still rages

Contributed by Tangata Vainerere
Sunday, 08 August 2010
Last Updated Sunday, 08 August 2010

05 AUGUST 2010 PORT MORESBY (POST COURIER) ----- Papua New Guinea (PNG) Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare has abrogated the National Alliance constitution to hand power over to his son.

While the heat is on for Sir Michael to step aside and allow his deputy Don Polye to take over the top job, a ploy has also been engineered to dismantle the support of the National Alliance Highlands bloc for the latter.

With the Minj national convention now deferred, concerns have been raised that Mr Polye is being marginalised while Sir Michael makes it conducive for his son to take over the top job.

NA party president Simon Kaiwi has said the postponement was a result of recent political events and its implications on the party while Mr Polye reaffirmed his commitment to Sir Michael and the party yesterday.

“As far as I know, the position of the NA leadership is filled and there is no vacancy. “The leader is currently Sir Michael and I totally support his leadership,” Mr Polye said.

Cracks have emerged within the ruling party as late as the appointment of eight new ministries following the failed attempt by the Opposition to move a vote of no confidence.

Mr Polye who was poised to wrestle the leadership from Sir Michael at the convention reportedly only announced a reshuffle as acting prime minister two weeks ago which the Prime Minister had already signed before heading to Fiji with Foreign Minister Sam Abal.

A meeting held reportedly in Cairns last Sunday between State Enterprises Minister Arthur Somare, Treasurer Peter O’Neill, Southern Highlands Governor Anderson Agiru, Enga Governor Peter Ipatas and Foreign Affairs, Trade and Immigrations Minister Sam Abal was to dismantle Mr Polye’s support. Two top government officials said support for Mr Polye to take the leadership of NA was imminent as members were already fed up with the Chief.

“That meeting and other meetings of similar nature was a ploy to divide the support of Mr Polye in the Highlands bloc,” one of them said. They said it was unfortunate that the Minj convention had been put off to avert Sir Michael’s possible ouster but the National Alliance caucus can now ask Sir Michael Somare to step down.

It is understood the pressure is on Sir Michael to step down voluntarily and allow Mr Polye to assume the leadership of the party and lead it into the next election...PNS (ENDS)