

PACNEWS

Pacific News Agency Service - administered by the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA)
Third Edition Tuesday 20 March 2018 © Copyright PINA 2018

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FIJI - HEALTH: FBC NEWS

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Meningococcal disease is serious and deadly: Fiji Health Ministry

SUVA, 20 MARCH 2018 (FBC NEWS) --- The public is advised to seek urgent medical attention if they see signs and symptoms of Meningococcal disease as Fiji's Health Ministry has declared an outbreak.

Acting National Advisor Communicable Disease, Dr Aalisha Sahukhan says this shouldn't be taken lightly as it's a life threatening disease caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*.

Dr Sahukhan says they have seen an increase in cases since 2016 which causes infection in the lining of the brain and in the blood, or both.

She says the Ministry is taking immediate nationwide action to counter this as it can be treated if detected early.

"The signs and symptoms are sudden fever, vomiting, headache, and stiff neck/backache. Other symptoms include nausea, eyes are sensitive to light, confusion, rash – red/purple spots in the skin. It can be difficult to notice the symptoms in babies, or they may not be there at all."

Some of the symptoms that you should be alert for in babies are; high fever, unusual crying, refusing to eat or drink, vomiting, floppy/drowsy, changes in sleeping patterns, seizures or Fits and rash – red/purple spots on the skin.

Dr Sahu Khan says meningococcal disease is not easily transmitted but spread from person to person.

"You can pass it via saliva or spit so this can happen when you are kissing on the mouth, sharing cups or utensils often I think in our culture we often share things a lot so cups at social gatherings you may be having a party and there may be alcohol and there tends to be sharing of cups in that situation."

Prior to 2016, there was one to ten cases reported per year.

However, in 2016 there was 29 cases, and in 2017 48 cases were recorded.

This year there have been 18 cases as of 21 February 21st.....PACNEWS

NZ and Fiji to cooperate on maritime surveillance

WELLINGTON, 20 MARCH 2018 (MFAT) ---- Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters today announced that New Zealand will deploy a Royal New Zealand Navy Inshore Patrol Vessel to Fiji for three months in 2018 to support maritime and fisheries surveillance.

Later this year a New Zealand Offshore Patrol Vessel will also conduct complementary patrols in Fiji's wider Exclusive Economic Zone.

"New Zealand is very proud to be partnering with Fiji to support their programme of maritime surveillance and security," Peters says.

"We share a deep and abiding interest in supporting the region's maritime security and ensuring that the Pacific's natural resources are protected for future generations. Fiji has an exclusive economic zone about one third the size of New Zealand's and, as fellow island nations, both our countries place enormous importance on the security and protection of our maritime environment.

"The New Zealand Government recently committed to a 'reset' of our relationship with our Pacific neighbours and cooperation with Fiji on maritime surveillance is a clear demonstration of our willingness to work with Pacific countries in areas of mutual benefit.

"This deployment will further links between our two countries, detect and deter illegal fishing in Fiji's waters, and complement regional surveillance coordinated by the Forum Fisheries Agency," Peters says.

The RNZN Inshore Patrol Vessel will be deployed to Fiji between May and August, followed by the Offshore Patrol Vessel conducting patrols later in the year. This will build on the successful deployment on the HMNZS Hawea to Fiji in 2017....PACNEWS

Report: PNG Earthquake natural

HELA, 20 MARCH 2018 (THE NATIONAL) --- Hela Governor Philip Undialu has cast doubt on an Australian government report which cleared resource companies of blame for the recent earthquake.

The report by Australian government agency Geoscience Australia cleared mining and hydrocarbon companies of any wrongdoing over the 7.5 magnitude earthquake which caused much devastation in the Highlands. Undialu and Hela provincial administrator William Bando were given copies of the report by Oil Search staff in Moro last Saturday.

He said an independent investigation must be conducted into the earthquake under the terms of reference of the Hela government.

The report said there was significant public concern that industrial activities such as mining or hydrocarbon exploration and production in the Highlands, could have contributed to the earthquake.

The report said:

"While the Feb 26 earthquake was the largest earthquake in the Highlands since 1900, its occurrence was consistent with the known seismic characteristics of the region;

"The high frequency of earthquakes in this region is due to natural tectonic processes that have been recognised by many geological studies of the region over the past half-century;

"The size of the earthquake and intensity of the ground shaking of this event are consistent with the regional plate tectonics that have formed the New Guinea Highlands over millions of years;

"The depth at which this earthquake started (17km or more) is not consistent with earthquakes triggered through mining or hydrocarbon and extraction activities, which generally occur at depths less than 5km; and "The Feb 26 earthquake is highly unlikely to have been triggered through mining or hydrocarbon exploration and extraction activities.".....PACNEWS

PNG - EARTHQUAKE RECOVERY: THE NATIONAL

PACNEWS 3: Tue 20 Mar 2018

PNG PM praises relief efforts

PORT MORESBY, 20 MARCH 2018 (THE NATIONAL) --- Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Peter O'Neill has commended the partnership between the Government, private sector and development partners towards the relief efforts after the recent earthquake.

He told the PNG Petroleum and Energy Summit in Port Moresby the earthquake was the worst PNG had experienced.

"The disaster has been terrible but I have no doubt that we will recover and we will further promote the industry in our country," he said.

"We've seen an ongoing rise in the prices in oil and gas which has been good. But we have seen the worst earthquake that hit the Highlands region in nearly 100 years.

"The scale of this disaster is substantial and the impact on the local community is devastating.

"We still haven't got the final confirmed death toll but we know it is well over 150 lives lost.

"There still remains a high risk threat of diseases to be present and the aftershocks are continuing.

"Working together with the private sector, our development partners, and the governments of Australian, New Zealand and China for the swift and effective response to the disaster.

"I thank the private sector for their outstanding contribution to this effort, in particular Oil Search who have demonstrated their commitment to our people, swinging into action very early just after the earthquake struck.

"This response has saved lives and continued to give hope to the people in the disaster area who are scared and confused."

O'Neill also acknowledged ExxonMobil, Mineral Resources Development Company, Defence Force, Australia and New Zealand governments and other partners.

O'Neill commended Ok Tedi and Kumul Petroleum Holdings, both donated K50 million (US\$15 million) each.

"I am very encouraged by the partnership. There is no doubt that we will continue to enhance this so we can support many of the affected communities for years to come," O'Neill said.

The participants observed a two-minute silence for those who lost their lives during the earthquake.....
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Details released for landmark Pacific trade deal

WELLINGTON, 20 MARCH 2018 (NZ GOVT) --- Trade Minister Todd McClay says the public release of the PACER Plus text will help highlight the important benefits of the landmark trade and development deal for New Zealand and the Pacific.

The release of the text, agreed to by all 14 countries, is consistent with a renewed commitment to improving engagement and transparency around trade issues and will be followed up with a public outreach programme in the coming months.

"The text shows how this carefully crafted trade and development agreement will help raise standards of living, create employment opportunities and increase export capacity in Pacific Island countries," McClay says.

"It outlines the \$55 million development package and how PACER Plus will assist the sustainable growth of the Pacific economies through trade."

"It also shows how New Zealand has secured lower tariffs on the vast majority of our traditional trade interests and how our exporters will save an estimated \$20 million a year on tariffs once the agreement is fully in force."

A range of factsheets will also be published the MFAT website and further supporting details will be updated, including dates and locations for the public meetings, as they are available.

"I encourage everyone to make the most of these sessions so that the full benefits of the agreement are realised, both for New Zealand and our region," McClay said.

"An important focus of Trade Agenda 2030, our new trade strategy, is for improved transparency and better engagement. Trade equals jobs and we want New Zealanders to better understand the close relationship trade has with our country's economic growth."....PACNEWS

Emergency supplies to be sent to Vanuatu's Ambae

PORT VILA, 20 MARCH 2018 (RNZ PACIFIC) --- Vanuatu's National Disaster Management Office says it will get emergency supplies to those affected by Ambae's erupting volcano as soon as possible.

The eruptions have intensified over the past week with officials raising the alert level on Sunday.

Local NDMO reports said the renewed volcanic activity was leaving a heavier ash fall than the eruption last year.

It said three communities had been relocated and the central government has been asked for help.

The office's operations manager Peter Korisa said the main request has been for food and water, with ashfall affecting the local supply.

Korisa said the NDMO now needed to confirm the number of people affected, as well as the volcano's impact on water and food supplies so they can respond effectively.

Peter Korisa said the assessment will start tomorrow, and it will be early next week at the soonest before food and water supplies can be shipped to the island.....PACNEWS

Tonga Government sees rugby and boxing as not for girls

NUKU' ALOFA, 20 MARCH 2018 (RNZ PACIFIC) --- A women's rights advocate in Tonga is outraged at a letter from the country's Ministry of Education banning school girls from taking part in rugby and boxing.

The letter addressed to a local high school, said that female students should not take part in the sports because they took away from young women's dignity and cultural traditions.

'Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki said the ministry was using culture as an excuse and she could not understand the stance.

She said Tongan female athletes had been inspirational in recent times, including New Zealand's Teuila Fotu-Moala.

"Teuila, who got the female player of the tournament for the women's rugby league world cup, that story hit Tonga last year and made a lot of people proud. To see these women excelling in sport, I mean, you look at Valerie Adams. This letter from the Ministry of Education has taken us a hundred years backwards, said Guttenbeil-Likiliki... PACNEWS

VAN - BILINGUAL UNIVERSITY: RNZ PACIFIC

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France to fund building of Vanuatu bilingual university

NOUMEA, 20 MARCH 2018 (RNZ PACIFIC) --- A bilingual university is to be built in Vanuatu with financial support from France.

An agreement for the project has been signed in Noumea by New Caledonia's president Philippe Germain and the visiting Vanuatu prime minister Charlot Salwai.

According to New Caledonia's public broadcaster, the French Development Agency will fund 60 percent of the construction costs and New Caledonia's government will contribute a further 24 percent.

The signing in Noumea has cleared the release of just over US\$1.4 million for the project, which is expected to be completed for opening in 2020.

The report said the new national university will also help train ni-Vanuatu students to work in the tourism sector.....PACNEWS

PACNEWS BIZ

PNG - MINING: SMH

PACNEWS BIZ: Tue 20 Mar 2018

PNG gold and copper mine to cost JV partners an extra \$1bn upfront

SYDNEY/PORT MORESBY, 20 MARCH 2018 (SMH) --- Newcrest Mining will plough an an extra US\$1 billion (\$A1.3 billion) in upfront capital into developing a new gold and copper mine in Papua New Guinea.

Australia's biggest gold miner released the estimate for the Wafi-Golpu project on Monday showing total capital expenditure for the life of mine, situated about 65 kilometres south west of PNG's second-biggest city Lae, would fall by about the same amount to US\$5.38 billion.

The cost of the project will be split between Newcrest and Harmony Gold Mining Company.

The Wafi-Golpu project is a key part of Newcrest's future, and is considered the company's top growth asset. It has an expected "life of mine" of about 28 years. The updated feasibility study estimates it would produce on average about 161,000 tonnes of copper per year, which is about double the group's copper guidance for fiscal 2018. The study estimates it would produce about 266,000 ounces of gold per year.

Newcrest attributed the higher upfront capital cost, relative to earlier studies, to the "adoption of deep sea tailings storage" to deal with tailings from the mining operation, construction of an on-site power plant, a larger processing plant and a deeper and larger initial block cave.

In a statement the company said its latest feasibility research identified deep sea tailings storage as the preferred option for managing tailings, and came after examination of 45 possible sites considered for land-based tailings storage dams or dry-stacking sites.

Newcrest highlighted a number of disadvantages from using a land-based storage, determining that the amount of storage volumes required "would result in a large disturbance footprint over an area which can have high traditional heritage and economic value, high biodiversity, and/or displacement of communities and their livelihoods".

The miner also cited the project area's "high seismicity and complex geology, including active faulting, which could at some sites result in liquefiable soils. Complex design would be required to partly mitigate such factors, and that would carry high risk and high cost in both construction and ongoing operation." Loading

The area's high rainfall was also mentioned, a factor requiring costly and significant management and treatment plans. "Any structure would contain very large amounts of water with commensurate risks."

The Wafi-Golpu update comes less than two weeks after mining operations at Newcrest's Cadia mine in NSW were suspended because of a slump in a tailings dam wall.

Executive project director Bryan Bailie told Fairfax Media in an interview from PNG that the selection of deep sea tailings placement as the preferred option for tailings management "had nothing to do" with the recent Cadia dam incident.

Bailie said the PNG government recognised the potential of the project to make a significant economic and social contribution to PNG.

"If developed the project is expected to create economic benefits across Papua New Guinea and the Morobe province, including an estimated 2500 direct jobs during construction and about 850 during operations.

"The project will also contribute at a local, provincial and national level through the payment of royalties and taxes, through social investment programs etcetra," he said.

"In all the time that I've certainly been involved in the project the PNG government has been very supportive of this project, the local communities are the same," he said.

Newcrest managing director Sandeep Biswas said the company had a clear path forward for the project.

"The improved business case set out in the updated Feasibility Study clearly demonstrates the world-class nature of this multi-decade project," he said.....PACNEWS

SOL - LOGGING: SOLOMON STAR

PACNEWS BIZ: Tue 20 Mar 2018

MP Wale cautions on logging in Solomon Islands

HONIARA, 20 MARCH 2018 (SOLOMON STAR) --- Solomon Islands Member of Parliament (MP) for Aoke-Langalanga Matthew Wale has cautioned the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MoFT) on the revenue loss by government in the logging industry.

He raised this during the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) hearing into the 2018 national budget last Thursday, in the parliament.

Wale stressed that government seem to be doing nothing to stop corruption in the prices of round log exported overseas, which were sold for peanuts compared to its actual price in the world market.

He said revenues loss by government and landowners in the export of round logs amounted to millions since the actual prices in the world market revealed by the central bank is higher than the prices traded overseas by companies operated in Solomon Islands.

“What is wrong here?” Wale questioned. “Why the prices of round log exported overseas is not the same as the prices revealed by the Central Bank?” he further asked.

Wale told the delegation from the MoFT when he showed up at the PAC meeting that the ministry have to do something about this because government cannot allow the country's resources to be traded overseas without selling them according to the actual value revealed in the global market.

He said, big revenue is lost in the logging industry from these tricks and cunning moves to avoid paying the true value of round logs.

He said the country has suffered a lot to keep the most needed services as health and education to reach the people, but could not afford this because of finances, yet we allow our round logs to be sold at cheap price compared to its real value.

He said our schools could not provide the basic resources for children's learning and the state of the hospital is deteriorating but we continue to overlook the millions lost in the export of round logs, which could have used for health and education services.

Wale said someone is being bribed here and he suspects some politicians might involve as well on this corrupt practices that is allowed to continue entertained in the logging industry.

He urged ministry of finance and other responsible authorities to look into this and make it a priority address it, in order to collect more revenues to meet the many commitments of the government that has been neglected because of no funding..... PACNEWS

PACNEWS DIGEST

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Asia-Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics considers improvements to data gathering with emphasis on Pacific Island countries and SDG progress

NADI, 20 MARCH 2018 (FAO) --- As the clock ticks towards 2030, the year when the world's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are to be achieved, countries in the Asia-Pacific region are working to improve their systems of statistic-gathering and analyses for better planning of production in crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry sectors.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), as Secretariat, opened the 27th Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS) in Fiji, the first time in its 50 year history that APCAS has convened in a Pacific Island country. The Commission Session runs from 19-23 March, hosted by the Government of Fiji.

Focusing on the specific needs of food and agricultural statistics of the Pacific Island countries, as well as other countries of Asia-Pacific, this biennial meeting of agricultural statisticians and experts will review the region's preparedness to produce adequate agricultural statistics to monitor progress towards the 2030 SDG targets.

The urgency for statistics in the face of climate change

The Pacific sub-region is home to some of the world's most vulnerable populations at risk of the long-term impacts of climate change. A majority of the population live in rural areas and rely on agriculture and fisheries for their livelihoods.

The APCAS meeting provides a platform for Pacific Island countries to more directly engage in drawing attention to their unique challenges in development of agricultural statistics such as geographical remoteness, cropping patterns, limited statistical infrastructure and resources, and learn about the experiences and good practices from member countries in Asia.

"Agriculture is vulnerable to the long-term impacts of climate change, therefore building a sustainable agricultural statistics system will not only help in targeted policy making but also support monitoring the progress towards the sustainable development goals [SDGs], said Faiyaz Koya, Fiji's Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Land and Mineral Resources.

"Clearly if we are to meet the 2030 SDG targets, we need reliable statistics on almost a real time basis, which can be achieved only by establishing technically sound systems for collection of statistics while taking advantage of modern technologies. For the countries in the Pacific, that means a special focus on crops and fisheries," said Kundhavi Kadiresan, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific. "FAO stands ready to support national efforts to improve data gathering through its technical assistance programmes."

Participants at the meeting were to deliberate on the challenges of meeting unprecedented data demands to monitor the SDG goals in order to achieve food security, reduce hunger, improve nutrition and build resilience for climate change adaptation, particularly in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

"Monitoring the SDG agenda is a challenge for most statistical systems, but the current data and capacity gaps are particularly severe in the Pacific region. FAO is offering a comprehensive package of capacity development initiatives to help countries produce their own data and become visible in global databases and monitoring reports. FAO is establishing close partnerships with the UN System and other development agencies for the implementation of these initiatives," said Pietro Gennari, FAO's Chief Statistician.

A special plan for the Pacific and a global strategy

Adding to the many firsts, a landmark Strategic Plan for the Pacific region, prepared jointly by FAO and the Pacific Community (SPC), was launched during the meeting. The Pacific Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Fisheries Statistics (P-SPAFS) is a 10-year plan that aims to guide the development of agricultural, fisheries and rural statistics in the Pacific SIDS for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

"Holding of 27th Session of APCAS in Fiji will bring impetus to statistical developments in Fiji and neighbouring countries," said Mukesh Srivastava, Secretary of the Commission.

The APCAS session will also review the achievements of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (GSARS) in the region, particularly the Strategic Planning for Agricultural Statistics, developing of Integrated System of Agricultural Census and Surveys, and to provide statistics in a cost-effective manner.

Fiji and Samoa have pioneered the GSARS work in the Pacific with Fiji working actively towards endorsement of its SPARS by the Government. The Government of Samoa has already endorsed SPARS showing its commitment towards developing agricultural and rural statistics. Papua New Guinea and Tonga, selected in 2017, have initiated actions in this direction.

In addition, the Commission Session will serve as a forum for sharing advances and innovation in economic, social and environmental statistics, the new World Programme for the Census of Agriculture (WCA) 2020, and Agricultural Market Information Systems. The WCA provides global standards to member countries in charge of planning and conducting agriculture census to ensure international comparability of data produced through censuses. The recommendations of APCAS will serve as a guide and lay down priorities for FAO for the next two years in its effort towards building capacity of countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

FAO in collaboration with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is also organising a workshop immediately following APCAS to build the capacity in four Pacific countries; Fiji, Niue, Papua New Guinea and Samoa to help them plan their next agricultural census in a harmonized and standardised manner.....PACNEWS

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PACNEWS DIGEST

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Samoa makes its contribution to regional policy consultations

APIA, 20 MARCH 2018 (PIFS) --- Policy consultations to inform the development of regional initiatives called for by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders are taking place this week in Samoa.

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat has been conducting consultations over the last three months to gather the views of Government officials, civil society and private sector representatives, and members of the public, to form a deeper understanding of its members' common development issues.

"The concept of a Blue Pacific that Forum Leaders endorsed during their 2017 meeting here in Apia last September aims to harness our shared ocean identity, geography and resources to develop policies that will drive positive change for our people; these consultations will be key in informing such policies," Cristelle Pratt, the Pacific Islands Forum Deputy Secretary General said.

"We celebrate our resources, environment, and cultures but we also recognize that we achieve more working as a collective rather than individual countries thus the importance we place on initiatives that will promote regionalism, like these consultations, as architects of our own future."

"The discussions this week will form the basis of policy advice that the Forum Secretariat will provide to the Forum Leaders when they meet later this year in Nauru."

To date the consultations have covered a range of existing regionalism proposals that Forum Leaders have asked the Secretariat to investigate further. These include the proposed Biketawa Plus security declaration, a Forum Foreign Policy, a Pacific Resilience Fund, options for labour mobility, and arrangements to strengthen resilient development in the Pacific.

Pratt is accompanied by two Advisers from the Forum Secretariat, Timothy Bryar and Alfred Schuster.....PACNEWS

Media inquiries and images available: media@forumsec.org

PACNEWS DIGEST

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Farmers receive over 21,000 trees from EU-SPC Reforest Project

BA, 20 MARCH 2018 (SPC) --- A reforestation project funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC) has begun distributing over 21,000 trees to farmers in the sugarcane belt on the Western side of Fiji's main island of Viti Levu.

The trees are being distributed to Leader Farmers, who will then pass them on to Link Farmers. The exercise, which is being conducted by the SPC-EU Reforest Fiji project, is distributing Sandalwood, Vesi, Citrus and Mahogany trees to farmers in the Saweni/Natova, Mota/Naloto, Rarawai, Tavua and Rakiraki farming communities.

The largest distribution of trees is being done today at Rarawai in Ba where farmers will receive 7,460 trees. The exercise coincides with the International Day of Forests #IntlForestDay which is observed on 21 March each year.

"The European Union is pleased to be funding the Reforest Fiji project. Reforest Fiji has been working with the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) and the EU-funded Fairtrade project to support Leader Farmers and Link Farmers through the distribution of high-value trees to sugarcane farms on Viti Levu's sugarcane belt. Once these trees are established, they will protect soil, reduce erosion, provide for species habitat, support the increasing use of renewable energy and reduce the use of fossil fuels and fight climate change. They will also assist farmers to supplement future on-farm incomes," said Christoph Wagner, Head of Co-operation at the Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific.

SPC Director General, Dr Colin Tukuitonga highlighted the importance of forests for building sustainable communities saying, "Investing in healthy forests brings wide ranging benefits to our communities. Forests support clean water and clean air, they become a source of local nutrition, medicine and, when used responsibly, provide a reliable income. The Reforest Fiji Project is a great example of creating a resilient Pacific and we are very proud to be a part of this effort."

The Reforest Fiji project's tree distribution exercise is running from 6 to 28 March, 2018.PACNEWS

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