



PACIFIC IMMIGRATION
DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

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NEWSLETTER

Our Members



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Vanuatu Introduces Electronic Passports Featuring Advanced Security Enhancements



Joint cake-cutting ceremony after the launch of the new passport machines. Photo: Daily Post

Vanuatu has upgraded its passport system to electronic passports with advanced security features, including encoded chips and biometric data collection. The new system aims to enhance protection and facilitate smoother international travels for Vanuatu's citizens.

Minister of Internal Affairs, Andrew Napuat, announced that biometric enrolment stations will be installed in six provincial centres and four Vanuatu embassies abroad (Brussels, Dubai, Hong Kong, and Noumea) within the next three months. Mobile kits will also be deployed to remote areas.

The Muhlbauer Company, with extensive experience in ID projects, will support the new system for the next three years. This upgrade addresses previous criticisms about passport printing delays and also aims to ensure efficient implementation with minimal disruption to ongoing programs.

Drug Smuggling at Brisbane Airport

The Australian Federal Police and Australian Border Force reported of a Canadian woman who has been charged after allegedly attempting to smuggle 14.4 kilograms of methamphetamine into Australia. The drugs were discovered in her luggage at Brisbane International Airport on July 28, 2024. The methamphetamine was concealed in plastic packages wrapped inside towels soaked in vinegar and layered with coffee beans.

The woman who started her journey in Vancouver, Canada, and travelled via Fiji, faces a maximum penalty of life imprisonment if convicted. The seized methamphetamine has an estimated street value of \$13.4 million and could have been sold as nearly 145,000 street deals.

This case highlights the ongoing efforts of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Australian Border Force (ABF) to combat drug smuggling and protect the community from the harmful effects of methamphetamine.

Source: *The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*

Our Vision: Secure international movement of people for safe and prosperous Pacific Communities.

Tonga Police Confiscated 6.1kg of Methamphetamine and Detained 17 Individuals

Tonga Police recently conducted a series of raids on Tongatapu, resulting in the seizure of 6.1 kg of methamphetamine and the arrest of 17 individuals. The raids took place on August 9, 13-14, and 17, targeting a drug syndicate allegedly involved in the importation, sale, and distribution of methamphetamine. Among those arrested were a customs officer, a prison officer, a prisoner, two members of the Comanchero gang, and a local businessman.

The methamphetamine was reportedly imported from the United States. This operation is part of ongoing efforts by Tonga Police to combat drug trafficking and organized crime in the region.

Source: *Matangi Tonga Online*

Number of Internally Displaced People Rising in PNG

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Papua New Guinea has been rising significantly. Over the past four years, 1.6 million people have been displaced due to various factors such as natural disasters, tribal conflicts, and climate change. William Tagai from the Department of Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs (DPLGA) mentioned that recent events like the Mulitaka landslide, continuous tribal fights in Enga and East Sepik, flooding in the Highlands, and rising sea levels in coastal provinces have contributed to this increase.

In response, the PNG government is conducting nationwide consultations to develop a policy to address the issue of IDPs. This policy aims to provide a coordinated approach to assist affected communities and will complement existing laws and systems.

Source: *PACNEWS*

Fiji Health Ministry Issued Mpox Advisory

Fiji's Ministry of Health and Medical Services has issued a travel advisory for migrants from countries affected by Mpox, following a World Health Organisation (WHO) declaration of an outbreak in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries. Mpox spreads through close contact, sexual contact, and contact with contaminated materials. Travelers developing symptoms like fever, body aches, and a blistering rash should seek medical attention and inform their doctor of their travel history.

The Ministry emphasizes that Mpox is generally mild and self-limiting, but severe cases can occur, especially in individuals with compromised immune systems, young children, and pregnant women. Fiji has protocols and guidelines for Mpox, established during the 2022 global public health emergency declared by WHO. The Ministry is reviewing its current measures and retraining healthcare workers in response to the recent WHO declaration.

Source: *PACNEWS*

Cyberbullying in Palau

As digital connectivity grows in Palau, cyberbullying has become a significant issue, particularly on social media platforms like TikTok and Facebook. Despite a 2020 Senate bill aimed at criminalizing cyberbullying and the unauthorized sharing of explicit images, no specific legislation has been passed, leaving victims vulnerable.

The anonymity of social media allows bullies to harass others without fear of consequences, often leading to widespread psychological harm. Ribka Kintaro Kanai, Program Manager for the Community Guidance Center, highlighted that cyberbullying is spreading much faster than traditional bullying due to the accessibility of digital platforms.

Palau's recent introduction of fibre-optic internet and the increasing use of smartphones among youth have exacerbated the problem. The Behavioural Health Division's Prevention Unit is actively raising awareness in schools, emphasizing empathy and kindness to combat both traditional and cyberbullying.

Kanai stressed the importance of community involvement and ongoing dialogue to address the issue. Support systems are available in schools, and the hotline 775-TALK offers anonymous help. Prevention remains key, with parents, teachers, and community members encouraged to foster a respectful and supportive environment. Addressing the root causes of bullying is also crucial, as bullies often come from difficult backgrounds themselves.

Source: *Island Times*

Charity Unknowingly Hand out Methamphetamine-Contaminated Pineapple Lollies

Auckland City Mission in New Zealand unknowingly distributed pineapple lollies containing potentially lethal amounts of methamphetamine. The issue came to light when a recipient reported the lollies tasted funny.

Each lolly was found to contain about 300 times the common recreational dose of meth. The police are investigating this as a possible drug smuggling operation gone wrong. The lollies, wrapped in Rinda brand packaging, were donated by an unknown individual and included in food parcels. Up to 400 people have been contacted by the charity, with eight families affected so far. Fortunately, no illnesses have been reported.



Source: *www.news.com.au*

Trafficking in Persons Capacity Assessment



The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Samoa Office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour (MCIL) and the Fisheries Division, recently validated findings from a Capacity Assessment on Trafficking in Persons. This is part of a regional project aimed at improving labour standards on fishing vessels in the Pacific, funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The assessment, conducted in several Pacific Island countries, evaluated Samoa's capacity to address trafficking in five areas: legislation and policy, coordination and partnerships, prevention, protection, and prosecution. Representatives from various government ministries and organizations attended the meeting.

Trafficking in Persons (TIP) is a severe human rights violation affecting millions globally, posing challenges to human rights, security, economic stability, and social cohesion. The Pacific region's vulnerabilities, such as geographic isolation and limited law enforcement, increase the risks of trafficking.

IOM has been combating human trafficking for over 20 years through capacity building, research, and direct assistance to victims.

Source: IOM UN Migration

U.S. to Intensity Collaboration with Pacific Nations to Combat Drug Trafficking



The United States plans to collaborate with Pacific Island nations to combat drug trafficking by Asian criminal networks using the region as a transit point for narcotics exports to the U.S.

The Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell highlighted the U.S.'s commitment to addressing the issue, which has led to a rise in overdose deaths and increased methamphetamine seizures in Fiji and Tonga.

Campbell noted that Pacific partners are eager to work with the U.S. on drug interdiction, treatment, and prevention. He was in Vanuatu to open the U.S. embassy and had met with leaders at the Pacific Islands Forum in Tonga. The Solomon Islands, seeking to re-engage with the U.S., and China's Pacific envoy Qian Bo, discussed potential cooperation areas, including climate change projects, which regional leaders welcomed. Campbell emphasized the importance of maintaining open communication between the U.S. and China.

Source: <https://en.tempo.co/read/1911001/u-s-to-step-up-work-with-pacific-nations-to-halt-drug-trafficking>

New Zealand Prime Minister and Australia Prime Minister Discussed Cybersecurity, Deportations and AUKUS Collaboration



Prime Minister Christopher Luxon of New Zealand and Anthony Albanese of Australia recently held discussions on several key issues, including cybersecurity, the deportation of New Zealand citizens under section 501 of the Australian Migration Act, and the AUKUS security pact. The following key points evolved from their discussions:

Cybersecurity: both leaders emphasized the growing threat of cyberattacks and the need for joint cooperation under trans-Tasman agreements. They acknowledged that a severe cyberattack would impose severe impacts as if from a traditional armed invasion.

501 Deportations: the issue of deporting New Zealand citizens who have committed crimes in Australia was also discussed. While both acknowledged the need to protect their own citizens from 501s, common sense must be applied continuously.

AUKUS Pillar Two: the leaders explored the possibility of New Zealand joining the second pillar of the AUKUS pact, which focuses on intelligence and technology sharing. Albanese noted that there are opportunities for New Zealand to engage in this area, which would enhance interoperability between the two countries' defence forces.

The above discussions reflect the strong and evolving relationship between New Zealand and Australia, particularly in areas of security and defence.

Source: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/world/525349/christopher-luxon-and-anthony-albanese-discuss-cybersecurity-501s-and-aukus-pillar-two>

Enhancing Cooperation on Migration Management



The Solomon Islands is actively engaging with international and regional bodies to modernize migration policies in response to new migration risks and challenges. Ongoing immigration reforms include a comprehensive legislative review and consultations to enhance border security and protection, supporting trade, investment, foreign employment, and migration. The new immigration framework will address global challenges such as human trafficking, people smuggling, and the protection of refugees and asylum seekers.

In addressing the increasing complexities of global migration, the Solomon Islands aims to enhance cooperation with the People's Republic of China (PRC) on Migration Management. Riley Mesepitu, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour, and Immigration, emphasized this at a recent Sub-Forum on Migration Management and Cooperation in Suzhou City, China. The theme, "Development and Innovation of Migration Management in a Changing Environment," aligns with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

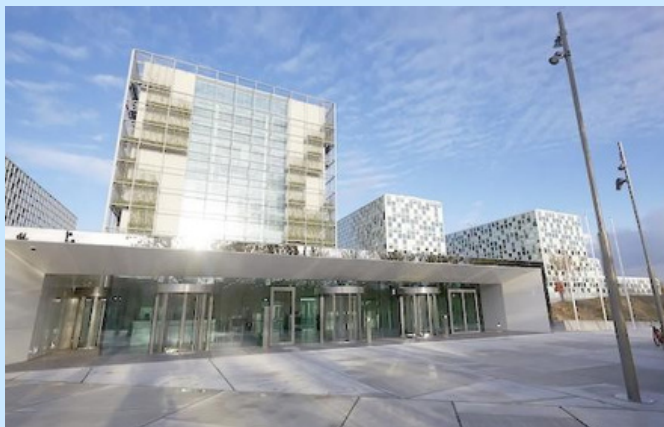
Mesepitu highlighted the crucial role of Immigration in supporting the Solomon Islands' trade, investment, travel facilitation, and border security. He stressed the importance of continuous reforms and digital transformation initiatives by the Immigration Division, in collaboration with national stakeholders and donor partners, to modernize immigration systems in line with international standards.

Additionally, the government is expanding Passport Services by decentralizing operations to provincial centers and international missions, aiming to better serve citizens domestically and abroad. The introduction of a biometric passport system will further improve the security and efficiency of immigration services.

Source:

<https://www.solomonstarnews.com/enhancing-cooperation-on-migration-management>

Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu Advocate for International Criminalising Ecocide



The International Criminal Court in The Hague, The Netherlands. Photo: AFP

Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu have proposed an amendment to the International Criminal Court's (ICC) principal treaty to include ecocide as a crime.

Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu have proposed an amendment to the International Criminal Court's (ICC) principal treaty to include ecocide as a crime. Vanuatu's special envoy for climate change, Ralph Regenvanu, emphasised the importance of recognizing severe environmental harm to ensure justice and deter further destruction. The proposal, co-sponsored by Fiji and Samoa, defines ecocide as unlawful acts causing significant environmental damage.

This initiative, supported by the Stop Ecocide Foundation, aims to hold individuals criminally accountable for severe environmental damage, such as oil spills or deforestation. If successful, it could lead to the prosecution of heads of polluting companies or states. The ICC currently prosecutes four international crimes, including genocide, but major greenhouse gas emitters like the US, Russia, and China are not ICC members.

Belgium has already introduced a national crime of ecocide, and the European Union has included a similar offence in its Environmental Crime Directive.

Source:

<https://www.samoanews.com/regional/samoa-fiji-and-vanuatu-say-ecocide-should-be-international-crime>

Samoa Immigration Prepares for Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting



In preparation for the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), Samoa Immigration team participated in the Hakili Matagi Samoa Border refresher training using ICE (Immigration Core Elements) modules. This training was identified as a crucial need during their regular zoom meetings with Hakili Matagi.

The refresher training aimed to bolster the skills and knowledge of the experienced team members while equipping new recruits with essential skills.

This initiative is part of their ongoing efforts to enhance border security and management capabilities in Samoa.

Team leaders commended and extended their heartfelt thanks to Hakili Matagi trainer Kevin Kneebone. PIDC also participated in one of the sessions, providing support to Hakili Matagi.

Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Conference held in Tonga



The Tongan Police hosted the 51st Annual Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP) Conference, which commenced on 3rd September, 2024, in Nuku'alofa.

The theme for the Conference, "Our Blue Pacific on the Global Stage" highlights the opportunity for the Pacific Police organisations to showcase their diversity and resilience on the global platform. It was a week filled with productive and engaging discussions among Chiefs and Commissioners, aligned with the mission of building highly capable policing and the vision of a safer Blue Pacific together.

The week also marked the 20th anniversary of the PICP-Women's Advisory Network, which held its first

meeting in Tonga in 2004, reaffirming their dedication to advancing the role of women in policing across the Pacific.

Additionally, Police Chiefs and Commissioners elected Commissioner Anthony Macaranas of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) as the Deputy Chair of the PICP. Commissioner Macaranas has had a distinguished 35-year career in law enforcement within the CNMI.

Source: www.picp.co.nz/post/51st-pacific-islands-chiefs-of-police-annual-conference

