

**High Commission of India  
Port Moresby**

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June 01, 2024

From: Hicomind Port Moresby  
To: MEA New Delhi – US(Oceania)  
Cc: Director(PP&R)/HC Suva/DHC Canberra/FS(Pol), Wellington

**DS (Oceania) from FS(Pol, Eco & Comm)**

**Monthly Commercial Report on Papua New Guinea(PNG) & Solomon Islands(SIs) - APRIL**

**Overview:**

- On April 01, Chinese Ambassador Zeng Fanhua donated US\$100,000 in cash to Foreign Minister Justin Tkatchenko and Defence Minister Dr. Billy Joseph for disaster relief. On April 04, US Ambassador Ann Marie Yastishock donated K3.45 million in emergency relief support to PNG Foreign Minister Justin Tkatchenko.
- On April 03, High Commr Inbasekar S held a meeting with Autonomous Bougainville Govt President H.E. Ishmael Toroama.
- On April 03, China's Special Envoy Qian Bo met with the Permanent Secy of Solomon Islands Foreign Ministry Collin Beck in Honiara; discussed comprehensive strategic partnership.
- On April 04, FM Justin Tkatchenko visited the Philippines and met Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo for the inaugural PNG-Philippines Policy Consultations.
- On April 10, High Commr Inbasekar S met Dr Transform Aqorau, VC, Solomon Isls National Univ(SINU); reviewed performance of Centre for Excellence in IT, funded by MEA India & supported by CDAC India.
- On April 10, High Commr Inbasekar S visited Nat'l Referral Hospital(NRH), Honiara, largest hospital in Solomon Isls and donated ECG machine, BP monitor to. CEO, NRH Dr. Malefoasi.
- On April 12, High Commr Inbasekar S met Dr Jimmy Rodgers, Secy to PM of Solomon Isls & Supervising Perm Secy MFAET Mr. Nego Sisiolo; reviewed implementation of FIPIC-3 deliverables.
- On April 17, PNG's Kumul Petroleum Holdings Ltd. sold its inaugural Liquefied Natural Gas shipment (144,000 m3) to PetroChina International Corporation Ltd.
- On April 17, PNG Defence Force Commander Commodore Philip Polewara officially announced the appointment of Col Edison Napyo as the Defence Advisor to India.
- On April 19, The PNG National Court cleared former PM Peter O'Neill on all charges related to the K3 billion U.B.S Loan from Switzerland.

- On April 19, Asian Development Bank(ADB) predicted PNG's GDP growth at 2% in 2023 & projected growth of 3.3% in 2024 due to commencement of Pogera Gold mine.
- On April 20, Chinese Foreign Minister(FM) Wang Yi arrived in Port Moresby on a two-day official visit, accompanied by senior high-level officials; signed five bilateral agreements.
- On April 22, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese(PMAA) arrived in Port Moresby to hike the Kokoda Track.
- On April 23, High Commr Inbasekar S welcomed Indian delegation from National Security Council Sectt, Directorate General Shipping, Indian Coast Guard, Jawaharlal Nehru Port, attending final workshop of ASEAN Regional Forum(ARF) Training Series.
- On April 23, PNG co-hosted the ASEAN Regional Maritime Security Forum with support from the US, Philippines & India.
- On April 23, Minister for International Trade and Investment, Richard Maru held a bilateral meeting with the New Zealand Minister for Agriculture and Trade Todd McClay in Auckland.
- On April 29, SIs PM Manasseh Sogavare announced his withdrawal from contesting for re-election.
- On April 30, PM James Marape (PMJM) announced an official Commission of Inquiry into the January 10 civil unrest which cost businesses an estimated K1 billion in damages & losses.

**PNG Bilateral Trade:**

PNG remains our largest trade partner among the Pacific Island Countries.

*Value: US\$ million(Source: Dept of Commerce, GOI)*

Year	2022-23	2023-2024 (Apr-Jan)
Export from India	85.84	57.39
Import into India	643.36	375.21
Total Bilateral Trade	729.20	432.6

**SIs Bilateral Trade:**

*Value: US\$ million(Source: Dept of Commerce, GOI)*

Year	2022-23	2023-2024 (Apr-Jan)
Export from India	2.69	2.74
Import into India	33.09	6.17
Total Bilateral Trade	35.78	8.91

**INTERNAL**

On April 01, PM James Marape toured flood, landslide, and earthquake-affected areas in the Highlands region and Sepik province. He announced a K100 million government allocation to aid victims and repair essential infrastructure damage across PNG worth K200 million+.

On April 03, PM James Marape issued a Military callout in Pogera, Enga province following a surge of illegal miners in the area disrupting commercial Pogera mining. 500 security personnel were deployed to the mining site to address the situation & protect the mine site.

On April 05, Chief Secretary Ivan Pomaleu presented a cheque of K5.82 million to PNG Chamber of Commerce & Industry President Ian Tarutia as relief for the first batch of businesses affected by the January 10 Crisis in Port Moresby.

On April 05, PM James Marape announced K26 billion in shareholder benefits for New Pogera Mine shareholders over the next 20 years.

On April 11, Central Bank Governor Elizabeth Genia announced that the country is expected to experience prolonged signs of inflation in 2024 due to the depreciation of Kina against the USD. Inflationary pressures are expected to remain high whilst Consumer Price Index(CPI) is expected to increase to 5% in 2024. GDP growth in 2023 was 1.3%; projected to grow at 3% in 2024 due to reopening of the Pogera mine.

On April 11, Dy PM & Minister for Immigration & Citizenship John Rosso awarded 48 foreigners with PNG Citizenship status at Parliament House in Port Moresby.

On April 19, The Waigani National Court cleared former PM Peter O'Neill on all charges related to the K3 billion U.B.S Loan from Switzerland due to insufficient evidence.

On April 22, PNG's Independent Commission Against Corruption(ICAC) Dy Commr Daniel Baulch reported that approx 100 cases are under investigation; bribery cases surpass other corruption cases in public & commercial entities.

On April 23, PNG co-hosted the ASEAN Regional Maritime Security Forum with support from the US, Philippines & India; attended by approx 50 delegates from ASEAN countries including; Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, etc.

On April 23, PNG Maritime Safety Authority's Executive Manager Capt Krzysztof Orłowski stated an annual loss of K1.2 billion due to Illegal, Unreported & Unregistered fishing in the country's maritime economic zones.

On April 24, PNG govt extended five more companies relief assistance following the January 10 civil unrest. Chief Secy Ivan Pomaleu presented cheques to PNG Chamber of Commerce & Industry President Rio Fiocco. On April 25, Brian Bell Ltd CEO Mr Cameron Mackellar announced K75 million funding for reconstructing their warehouse after their old K50 million warehouse was destroyed in crisis.

On April 29, PNG Chamber of Commerce and Industry(PNGCCI) President Ian Tarutia reported that the PNG Govt disbursed K7 million in wage support to businesses affected by the January 10 Civil crisis; urged PNG Govt for additional grants for infrastructure reconstruction.

On April 30, The National Procurement Commission (NPC) of PNG released the audited report on Covid-19 Funds expenditure. It disclosed K270 million spent across six government departments, seven provinces, and 14 districts during the pandemic.

On April 30, PM James Marape (PMJM) announced an official Commission of Inquiry into the January 10 civil unrest to investigate PNG Police, government agencies, and individuals involved. On May 01, Police Commr David Manning assured compliance.

## **EXTERNAL**

### **PNG's Commercial Engagements**

#### **PNG- China**

- On April 01, Chinese Ambassador Zeng Fanhua handed US\$100,000 in cash to Foreign Affairs Minister Justin Tkatchenko and Defence Minister Dr. Billy Joseph for nationwide disaster relief after severe floods and landslides.
- On April 04, Chinese businesses in PNG through the PNG-China Friendship association donated K203, 000 in cash towards disaster relief operations in East Sepik province.
- On April 17, PNG's Kumul Petroleum Holdings Ltd. sold its inaugural Liquefied Natural Gas shipment (144,000 m3) to PetroChina International Corporation Ltd. CEO Wapu Sonk met PetroChina's Li Shaolin, discussing investments. On April 18, PM Marape conferred with PetroChina Executives in Port Moresby, exploring partnership opportunities in PNG's oil & gas industry.
- On April 20, Chinese Foreign Minister(FM) Wang Yi arrived in Port Moresby on a two-day official visit, accompanied by senior high-level officials. He was received at Jacksons International Airport by PNG's FM Justin Tkatchenko, National Capital District(NCD) Governor Powes Parkop & Chinese Ambassador Zeng Fanhua. FM Wang Yi held bilateral discussions with FM Tkatchenko; signed five bilateral agreements including; funding of US\$ 1 million for disaster relief assistance to PNG (in response to recent floods, earthquake & landslides); MoU on ICT Cooperation; Funding of US\$ 270,000 for joint feasibility study for Free Trade Agreement, and two agreements under the PNG-China Agreement for Protocols of Phytosanitary requirements for export of unroasted Cocoa & Coffee beans.
- On April 21, International Trade Minister Richard Maru met with China's Dy Commerce Minister Tang Wenhong; discussed trade & investment opportunities. Minister Maru reported that China is fast becoming PNG's most important trading partner with trade surplus valued at about K4.1 billion (USD 1.1. billion).

#### **PNG- Australia**

- On April 02, CEO of Australian International Airliner Qantas Mr. Cam Wallace announced direct flights between Port Moresby & Sydney.
- On April 03, Australian High Commr John Feakes met with Minister for International Trade & Investments Richard Maru; discussed PNG-AUS trade relations.
- On April 07, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong and Minister for International Development and the Pacifico Pat Conroy jointly announced funding of \$45.5 million (K114, 618, 699.20) in six new initiatives to strengthen health systems across the Pacific.
- On April 08, Australian Federal MP for Cunningham, New South Wales, Alyson Brynes visited Port Moresby and also inspected the Motukea Warf, which is currently rehabilitated under Australian funding.

- On April 08, Minister for Tourism Isi Henry Leonard, accompanied by National Capital District Gov Powes Parkop visited Sydney, Australia; held discussions with the Canada Bay City council on tourism prospects for PNG.
- On April 22, Australian-owned company Mayur Resources Ltd announced that it has executed a definitive debt-financing agreement with Finance company Appian Capital for US\$ 155 million to complete the Central limestone project.
- On April 23, Australian-owned Oil & Gas company Santos Ltd announced total cash flow of US\$ 692 million for the first quarter of 2024. Santos CEO Kevin Galagher reported steady increase in production as drilling sites recover from scheduled maintenance from 2023-24.

## **PNG- U.S**

- On April 04, US Ambassador Ann Marie Yastishock on behalf of USAID donated K3.45 million in additional emergency relief support for communities in East Sepik received by Foreign Minister Justin Tkatchenko.
- On April 03, American Gold mining company Newmont Ltd's CEO Tom Palmer paid a courtesy visit to PM James Marape in Port Moresby; discussed the Lihir & Waffi-Golpu mining operations & other business arrangements.
- On April 12, Foreign Minister Justin Tkatchenko met with US Ambassador to PNG Ann Marie Yastishock; discussed implementation of the DCA with the US & the New Revised Reciprocal VISA Arrangements between PNG-US.
- On April 17, the US Embassy in Port Moresby announced US Govt's approval to extend Visa validity for PNG citizens from 1 month to six months.
- On April 23, American-owned Company Newmont Corporation Ltd reported payment of K1.7 billion in taxes, royalties and benefits during the 2023 fiscal year.

## **PNG-Japan**

- On April 17 – 18, Japanese Ambassador Nobuyuki Watanabe visited The Autonomous Region of Bougainville(AROB) & met with President Ishmael Toroma; discussed development cooperation & launched an innovative hub centre in Buka funded by JICA.

## **PNG- France/ European Union**

- On April 07, PM James Marape met with Chairman and CEO of TotalEnergies Patrick Pouyanné; discussed the status of the Papua LNG project with international partners ExxonMobil, Santos & JX Nippon.
- On April 15, On April 15, a French Government delegation, led by Aurore Alexander of the French Development Agency, visited Eastern Highlands province; held discussions with Governor Simon Sia & toured conservation sites.
- On April 26, The European Union, via the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), allocated €200,000, (approx PGK 807,000) to assist victims of recent natural disasters in PNG.

## **PNG- Singapore**

- On April 23, Newly appointed Singaporean High Commr to PNG Ong Hew Huat visited Port Moresby & presented his credentials to Governor General Sir Bob Dadae at government house. Sir Bob affirmed close ties between PNG-Singapore; called for further cooperation in business, trade & investments, climate change and banking services.

## **PNG- South Korea**

- On April 04, South Korean Ambassador Kang Ho-jeung donated US\$ 200,000 worth of ICT equipment to Public Service Minister Joseph Sungi for PNG's Institute of Leadership & Governance in Port Moresby.

## **PNG- New Zealand**

- On April 23, Minister for International Trade and Investment, Richard Maru held a bilateral meeting with the New Zealand Minister for Agriculture, Hunting and Fishing, Forestry, and Trade, Todd McClay in Auckland; discussed trade & investment opportunities including a proposed comprehensive, economic, and development partnership under a proper agreement.

## **PNG- ADB**

- On April 19, Asian Development Bank(ADB) Country Director Said Zaindanyah in a press conference released the economic performance outlook report for PNG; reported GDP growth at 2% in 2023 & projected growth of 3.3% in 2024 due to commencement of Pogera Gold mine. Inflation is projected by ADB to increase from 2.3% in 2023 to 4.5% in 2024. (Separate report sent to Commerce Ministry)

## **PNG- Philippines**

- On April 04, FM Justin Tkatchenko visited the Philippines, met Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo for the inaugural PNG-Philippines Policy Consultations. They discussed bilateral, regional, and international issues, trade, education, health, agriculture, and development. Tkatchenko also proposed a visa-on-arrival (VOA) facility for Philippines passport holders & a potential Cooperation agreement.

## **BILTERAL**

On April 03, High Commr Inbasekar S hosted lunch for Autonomous Bougainville Govt President H.E. Ishmael Toroama; discussed capacity building in education, health sector in Bougainville.

On April 17, PNG Defence Force Commander Commodore Philip Polewara officially announced the appointment of Col Edison Napyo as the Defence Advisor to India in a ceremony; witnessed by Defence Minister Hon. Dr. Billy Joseph, MP, Defence Secretary Hari John Akipe.

On April 23, High Commr Inbasekar S welcomed Indian delegation from National Security Council Sectt, Directorate General Shipping, Indian Coast Guard, Jawaharlal Nehru Port, attending final workshop of ASEAN Regional Forum(ARF) Training Series at APEC house, Port Moresby from 23-25 April 2024. On April 24, As part of Indian delegation at the ASEAN Regional Forum ISPS code workshop in Port Moresby, PNG, Indian Coast Guard presented a perspective on port vulnerabilities towards maritime crimes and best practices.

On April 23, High Commr Inbasekar S gave keynote address at Convocation of IBS Univ; encouraged Graduates to avail ITEC network, equip job-related skills, pursue studies in India.

## **Opportunities for investments/assets on offer/major company divestment.**

On April 05, Prime Minister James Marape reported that world-class mines in PNG including the Panguna, Lihir, Ok Tedi, Porgera, K92 and more recently the upcoming Wafi Golpu and the Frieda River presents a profitable business environment for investors as economy would experience an unprecedented economic boom in the coming decade and invited international investors who were interested in downstream processing of raw materials in line with his governments policy focus.

### **Issues of National importance:**

- On April 22, Minister Assisting PM on Treasury matters Ian Ling-Stuckey announced details of his recent meeting with World Bank President Manuela Ferro; discussions encompassed National Energy Access Transformation(NEAT) project worth US\$ 204 million funded by APEC members in 2018 to connect 70% of the population via grid by 2030 among other WB initiatives.

### **PNG's Fuel Crisis situation:**

- On April 15, Air Niugini CEO Garry Sedon announced minor flight disruptions due to Jet Fuel shortage by fuel supplier Puma Energy Ltd. Puma Energy CEO Hulala Tokome reported that the company cannot access FX reserves to pay for Fuel overseas, therefore it has requested Kumul Petroleum to import on its behalf. The delay in re-purchase from Kumul Holding by Puma using Kina(K) is stalling fuel supply.

**Fuel Prices Decrease:** For the month April 2024, the Indicative Retail Prices (IRPs) for petrol, diesel and kerosene will all decrease on average, throughout PNG. The retail price decreases are mainly attributed to the slight decrease in domestic freight charges for the second quarter of 2024.

## **SOLOMON ISLANDS (SI)**

On April 03, China's Special Envoy for Pacific Island Countries Affairs Qian Bo met with the Permanent Secy of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Collin Beck in Honiara; discussed comprehensive strategic partnership, trade, regional developments & international issues.

On April 03, SIs Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates(UAE) Cornelius Walegereia presented his credentials to the Asst. Undersecretary for Protocol Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Saif Abdulla Alshamisi; discussed strengthening cooperation in the areas of mutual interests including business and trade, political relations, and people to people connection.

On April 09, Chinese Ambassador Cai Weiming announced that SI-China bilateral trade reached US\$540 million in 2023; China reduced the tariff of 98 percent on SIs products to zero percent. He assured China's commitment is infrastructure development ranging from road networks, sports stadiums and telecommunication infrastructure in the country; emphasized that signed MOU to formalize Sister Relationship between Malaita Province & Jiangsu Province on April 04 signals renewed efforts to strengthen SI-China relationship.

On April 10, Chief Electoral Commissioner Jasper Highwood Anisi publicly acknowledged the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) for the safe and efficient delivery of ballot papers to the provinces. The NZ Govt has deployed Air Force NH90 helicopters for election delivery in SIs.

On April 11, The Asian Development Bank predicted growth in SIs to moderate slightly to 2.2% in both 2024 & 2025 as activities related to the 2023 Pacific Games wind down. The report stated that public debt is projected to increase—but remain within government limits—to finance infrastructure and budget deficits, while inflation would decelerate in line with global trends. Balancing fiscal sustainability with long-term investment needs is an ongoing challenge.

On April 16 – 18, The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) led joint security patrols in Honiara and across the country with security forces from Australia, New Zealand PNG & Fiji under Solomon International Assistance Force (SIAF) program.

On April 17, Polling commenced & ended for 2024 SIs national General elections. Approx 309,797 voters (86.17% of total registered voters) participated from 1,106 polling stations spread across the island country. There were 334 candidates who contested for 50 seats in parliamentary election. (Separate Report Sent to Ministry)

On April 18, the counting process commenced for Parliamentary, Provincial & the Honiara City Council seats. Polling & counting process have been generally peaceful so far, with only one minor incident reported in Malaita province on April 21. Approximately 400 independent observers from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Europe, US, Melanesian Spearhead Group(MSG) & Pacific Islands Forum(PIF) observed the election.

On April 20, PM Manasseh Sogavare was re-elected with 49% of votes in his East Choiseul constituency beating United Party's candidate David Qurusu who came second at 42% of primary votes.

As of April 24, the full 50 parliamentary seats declared by SIs Electoral Commission, however no single party reached absolute majority threshold. Sogavare's Ownership, Unity and Responsibility(OUR) party leads the race with 15 seats. The Coalition for Accountability Reform and Empowerment (CARE) coalition of Matthew Wale's SIDP, U4C & former PM Rick Hou's Democratic Alliance Party(DAP)is currently trailing with 13 seats. Independent candidates hold 10 seats & micro parties hold 5 seats. Opposition MP Peter Kenilorea Jr's united party(UP) has 7 seats. (Separate Report Sent)

On April 24, Chief Electoral Officer and Commissioner Jasper Highwood thanked notable Donors and development partners who supported the SI Elections including the European Union, the Australian Government, New Zealand Government, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) among other partners.

On April 25, SIs Ambassador to China Barrett Salato met with the Secretary General of China Overseas Development Association (CODA), Mr. Jiang Yun, in Beijing and discussed the avenues for Chinese SOEs to invest in SIs under Comprehensive Strategic Partnership framework signed in 2023.



On April 26, Japanese Ambassador Miwa Yosiaki donated a SBD 2.5 million excavator machine to the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Department (EODD) of the Solomon Islands Police Force at Hells Point in Guadalcanal Province.

On April 29, SIs PM Manasseh Sogavare announced his withdrawal from contesting for re-election. Sogavare's Ownership, Unity and Responsibility(OUR) Party appointed former Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele as candidate for PMs seat.

## **BILATERAL**

**High Commissioner visited Solomon Islands from April 10 – 12:** High Commr Inbasekar S met Dr Transform Aqorau, VC, Solomon Isls National Univ(SINU); reviewed performance of Centre for Excellence in IT, funded by MEA India & supported by CDAC India; encouraged 2 Indian IT trainers to tailor courses to augment IT skills for SIs nation building. HC also called on Permanent Secy H.E. Franco Rodie; discussed distribution of NCERT text books to public schools in Honiara, printing school text books in India, virtual training of teachers; requested Solomon Isls to avail ITEC, ICCR scholarships. He then visited Nat'l Referral Hospital(NRH), Honiara, largest hospital in Solomon Isls and donated ECG machine, BP monitor to. CEO, NRH Dr. Malefoasi thanked Govt of India. HC also donated NCERT school text books to Betikama Adventist College & Lunga Community High School in Honiara; announced assistance to augment sanitary infrastructure, capacity-building in these schools; encouraged children to be self-reliant.

On April 12, High Commr Inbasekar S met Dr Jimmy Rodgers, Secy to PM of Solomon Isls & Supervising Perm Secy MFAET Mr. Nego Sisiolo; reviewed implementation of FIPIC-3 deliverables.

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