

MARITIME INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Westerland ok to sail

Fiji Times — 16 November 2010

THE suspension on shipping services by inter-island vessel mv *Westerland* to Rotuma has been lifted, says Fiji Shipping Corporation Ltd chief executive officer Simon Narayan. Mr Narayan made the comment yesterday after it was made public that the services were temporarily suspended following complaints from the Rotuma Island Council that the vessel had flaws. "The suspension has been lifted by the Minister (of Transport)," he said. "The Rotuma Island Council had earlier written to the minister that the vessel had some flaws in terms of the passenger safety. "But the Fiji Islands

Maritime Safety Administration (FIMSA) has cleared that, saying the vessel is safe to go. "As much as government has a social obligation to look after the island communities, government also wants to ensure passenger safety," he said. Mr Narayan said the mv *Westerland* would resume servicing the Rotuma route because of its ability to carry large cargo. He said the vessel would now cater for routes between Suva, Savusavu and Taveuni. Mr Narayan said this route was normally serviced by Bligh Water Shipping's mv *Suilven*, which was grounded at Mosquito Island in Suva last

week as a result of entangled fishing line on the propellers. "mv *Suilven* is under maintenance so mv *Westerland* will cater for that route until the MV *Suilven* comes back," he said. "Blue Lagoon's vessel *Nanuya Princess* will also be doing a trip from Lautoka to Rotuma. "They anticipate leaving on November 27." Meanwhile, Deputy Secretary Rotuma Affairs in the Prime Minister's Office Tomasi Tui said government ship mv *Iloilovatu* was expected to depart for Rotuma today.

Nasau harbor construction finished

Cook Islands News/PACNEWS – 15 November 2010

Work to develop a harbour at Nassau has been completed – more than 18 months after it first began. Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning Secretary Otheniel Tangianau said most of the work was completed last year, although poor weather conditions prevented it

from being finished until recently. Physical work of the \$800,000 development project began in April 2009, and was abandoned after about six months, until August this year when workers returned to the island to complete rock blasting. Previously, boats

anchored near the island's reef where cargo was offloaded and transferred to land. Tangianau said when funding becomes available concrete walls would be constructed along the sides of the passage to prevent waves from entering the basin.

First phase in Nauru port upgrade completed

RNZI/PACENEWS – 4 November 2010

The last new moorings for Nauru's port have been installed and tested marking the end of the first phase in a major redevelopment to boost phosphate revenues. The refurbishment aimed at improving the port's efficiency has been

aided by a nine million US dollar grant from Russia. A spokesman for the Nauru government Rod Henshaw said the next phase will involve repairing the port building and workshops. "All this is going to mean that instead of having vessels of

a capacity of 23 thousand tonnes, or cubic metres, they can now bring in phosphate vessels of much larger dimension, about 45 thousand tonnes fully loaded."

Transport problem threaten Election Day in Cook Islands north

Cook Islands News/PACNEWS – 8 November 2010

Cook Islands Northern group islands could be deprived of their right to vote at the November 17 general election if a solution to get the ballot forms and boxes to them is not found soon. Secretary of Justice Mark Short is warning it will be a national crisis if major problems with logistics of

transport to the north are not sorted out within the week. The Electoral Office needs to send about three electoral officers, ballot boxes, and ballot papers to the northern group islands. Its plan to combine Air Rarotonga flights with assistance from police patrol boat *Te Kukupa* has now fallen apart. Short says

Te Kukupa has been delayed on its return to Cook Islands waters and is reportedly fixing an engine problem. He said Taio Shipping's loss of *Te Kou Maru II* on the Mauke reef has had a domino-effect, resulting in a shortage of aviation fuel in the north – especially in Manihiki. Mr Short said plans to charter an Air

Rarotonga plane to island-hop through the northern group from November 11 have now faltered. The \$16,000 charter can't go ahead unless Taio Shipping's remaining vessel mv *Maungaroa* carries out its rescheduled voyage to Manihiki exactly as planned. The ship is scheduled to depart for the north on November 11 and reach Manihiki with the aviation fuel stocks on November 15. Penrhyn has some aviation fuel, and this is how Air Rarotonga has kept its flights going – by refuelling on the island and then going on to Manihiki. Air Rarotonga is now reliant on the ship delivering fuel to the northern group to be able to continue its flight schedule past next week. Added to this is the news that the *Maungaroa* is short on cargo and may not carry out its

voyage unless government covers the shortfall – which could be upwards of \$25,000. Mr Short said it is inconceivable that they would charter the ship to deliver fuel so that they can charter an Air Raro plane to transport the ballot boxes and officials to the north to conduct the elections. He says the cost alone would put a massive strain on the election budget (around \$200,000 in total). He said there is now only one fallback if the ship does not head north on November 11 – a possible offer of assistance from the French patrol boat that was due to arrive in Rarotonga last week. Mr Short said inquiries through the ministry of foreign affairs have resulted in positive indications from the boat that it may be able to help.

Traditionally, Palmerston and Nassau vote in advance of the election because of their isolation, but electoral officers still need to get to them and bring their ballot papers back to Rarotonga. Under the original plan for Te Kukupa to assist with the transport, it would have gone to Pukapuka, Nassau, on to Suwarrow to pick up the caretakers (who must return to Rarotonga during cyclone season), and then on to Palmerston. Mr Short is now urging government officials to work together to find a solution to the transport problems in order to avert a crisis.

Fiji to open consul general office in Shanghai

Fiji Sun/PACNEWS – 5 November 2010

Due to the growing cooperation between Fiji and China in the area of trade, plans are now underway for Fiji to open a Consul General Office in Shanghai. This was revealed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs Ratu Inoke Kubuabola during the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Fiji on Wednesday. Ratu Inoke said the priority Fiji placed on her relations with China could be seen in the intense pace of high-level visits in the past years. "The latest of these high-level official visit was within the last three months with our President's visit, that of our Prime Minister

and recently by myself," Ratu Inoke said. He said for Fiji, China offered the answers to the trade and investment aspirations. He said the scopes of engagement between both countries have therefore widened to now include a range of areas such as agriculture, tertiary education, trade, economic and development assistance. Ratu Inoke said Fiji had established two direct shipping routes between Shanghai and Fiji via Papua New Guinea. "This is removing one of the biggest trade barriers with China and greatly improving the shipping of goods and products between the two countries. Our investment

relations have also grown considerably. "China has great potential as a source of direct foreign investment and entrepreneurial skills in the fields of textile; milling and weaving; soft toys industry; tourism infrastructure development and furniture and food processing both in fisheries and agro products," he said. Ratu Inoke said China had also generously supported Fiji's development endeavours in the form of grants and soft loans which has enabled us to undertake socio-economic development projects for the well-being of our people.

New ferry waits for crew and outer island berths

Matangi Tonga – 12 November 2010

AT the start of the summer holiday season Tonga's new TOP\$30 million ferry mv *'Otuanga'ofa*, which arrived in Nuku'alofa on October 15, remains tied-up at the Queen Salote Wharf, because it has no crew and the passenger ferry berths at Pangai, Ha'apai and Neiafu, Vava'u are not yet ready. The Minister for Revenue Collection, the Hon. Teisna Fuko, in a program of Candidates Meeting the Press, this week said that there was a need to recruit trained crew. It had been suggested that sailors from the Tongan Navy would operate the vessel, but this was not acceptable to the Japanese government, therefore they were still in the process of recruiting

trained crew. Seventeen Toumo'ua, a Director of the Pacific Engineering Consultant Group, which has been contracted by the Ministry of Transport to upgrade the berths for the ferry, said that the vessel was too big and major upgrade work was needed to enable the ferry to berth, load and unload. He said that work on the Queen Salote berth had been completed. The construction work at the Port of Refuge, Vava'u was still on going, and the harbour needed to be dredged. The work on wharf at Pangai, Ha'apai should be completed by next week. Seventeen is a candidate for Tongatapu 9 in the November 25 election. Vaka'uta Pola Vi, the CEO of the

new Friendly Island Shipping Agency (FISA) told Matangi Tonga on November 8 that there was still a lot of work to be done before the new ferry begins operation and he could not give a specific time when the service would start. He said that they urgently needed a trained crew, and he was still waiting on the regulator, the Ministry of Transport on that. "Management and infrastructure systems also need to be put in place for the ferry", he said. He added that the major hold-up was that the construction of the wharves at Vava'u and Ha'apai had not been completed.

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