

# PACNEWS

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AUST - ELECTION/PM: ABC

PACNEWS 1: Mon 23 May 2022

## **Labor leader Anthony Albanese to be sworn in as Australia's new prime minister**

CANBERRA, 23 MAY 2022 (ABC)---Anthony Albanese will today be sworn in as Australia's 31st prime minister, as his incoming Labor government takes power after almost a decade of Coalition rule.

The weekend's election result has the Liberal Party on the hunt for a new leader, with Peter Dutton emerging as the most likely replacement for Scott Morrison.

Albanese will be sworn in with his deputy Richard Marles and frontbenchers Penny Wong, Jim Chalmers and Katy Gallagher.

He and Senator Wong, the incoming foreign affairs minister, will fly to Japan later today to meet with the leaders of the Quad — the United States, India and Japan.

Albanese wants National Cabinet to meet in person in the coming weeks as he sets about implementing his agenda.

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**Pacific leaders congratulate Labor's Albanese on election result**

SYDNEY, 23 MAY 2022 (REUTERS/ THE GUARDIAN) --- The Solomon Islands has congratulated Australia's Labor leader, Anthony Albanese, on his election victory, saying much "remains to be done" in the bilateral relationship, as Pacific islands neighbour Fiji welcomed the party's climate policies.

Albanese said he would be sworn in as the 31st prime minister on Monday along with four senior party members. In a statement on Sunday, Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare said his nation "remains Australia's steadfast friend and development partner of choice".

Sogavare had written to Albanese and "assured him of taking Solomon Islands' relationship with Australia to another level under Albanese's tenure".

Fiji Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama congratulated Albanese in a tweet, writing: "Of your many promises to support the Pacific, none is more welcome than your plan to put the climate first."

With Fiji's borders open, we hope to host you soon!" said Bainimarama.

In his reply Albanese said in a tweet "Thank you @fijipm – I look forward to working with Pacific countries to build a stronger Pacific family"

Anote Tong, the former president of Kiribati and a leading climate campaigner, said: "It is no secret that I have been disappointed with the attitudes of the previous Australian government towards the Pacific on a number of fronts, including climate change.

"My hope is that we will see stronger and more urgent climate action from the incoming government, including a more ambitious emissions reduction target, ramped-up support for climate-vulnerable communities in the Pacific and most importantly, a commitment to no new coal and gas projects in Australia."

Enele Sopoaga, the former prime minister of Tuvalu, who clashed with Morrison at the last in-person Pacific Islands Forum in 2019, said he welcomed the incoming government.

"Time is running out on climate change not only for Small Island Developing States like us in the Pacific, but also for Australia and the rest of the world. Our security, together with our survival, is at peril," he said.

"I can only hope that this new Australian government will make a radical shift towards strong and urgent climate action and genuine support for the Pacific. This would include radical new Australian targets for emissions reduction under the Paris Agreement, no new coal or gas, and an ongoing commitment to supporting Pacific Island nations as we face the brunt of climate impacts."

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said that she had called Albanese on Sunday, and that the two countries would continue to work together "deepening our partnership with our close friends in the Pacific, and advancing our interests on the world stage".

"Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand are at our best when we work together," she said.

New Zealand and Australia, while closely allied, have had some tense moments under Morrison's leadership – particularly over the Australian "501" policy of deporting residents with New Zealand citizenship on bad character or criminal record grounds, even if they had lived their entire lives in Australia.

In 2020, Ardern lashed out at Morrison at their annual bilateral summit, saying the policy was "testing" the friendship between the two nations, and Australia was deporting "your people and your problems" using "unfair" policies.

The UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, and the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, were among the first world leaders to respond to news of the Scott Morrison government's electoral defeat.

Johnson pointed to the free trade agreement and the Aukus partnership as the basis for an ongoing relationship when he tweeted his congratulations on Sunday night.

Modi tweeted his congratulations after midnight in Australia and highlighted his wish for the continuation of key security agreements ahead of a meeting of the Quad on Tuesday.

The U.S president, Joe Biden, who will also meet Albanese at the Quad summit on Tuesday, called to congratulate him, the White House said.

"President Biden reaffirmed the United States' steadfast commitment to the U.S-Australia alliance and his intent to work closely with the new government to make it stronger still," it said in a statement. "President Biden expressed deep appreciation for the prime minister-designate's own early commitment to the alliance, reflected in his decision to travel almost immediately to Tokyo to attend the Quad summit."  
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PAC - DIPLOMACY: THE FINANCIAL TIMES

PACNEWS 1: Mon 23 May 2022

### **China seeks more island security pacts to boost clout in Pacific**

BEIJING, 23 MAY 2022 (THE FINANCIAL TIMES) --- China is intensifying its drive for influence in the Pacific by negotiating security deals with two additional island nations following a pact with the Solomon Islands, according to officials in the U.S and allied countries.

Beijing's talks with Kiribati, a Pacific island nation 3,000km from Hawaii where U.S Indo-Pacific Command is based, are the most advanced, the officials said.

"They are in talks with Kiribati and at least one more Pacific island country over an agreement that would cover much of the same ground as that with Solomon Islands," said an intelligence official from a U.S ally.

The warning that Beijing is trying to further increase its clout in the Pacific came as President Joe Biden begins a visit to Asia intended to reassure allies of US commitment to regional security amid China's push for influence.

The negotiations with Kiribati follow the deal Beijing signed with the Solomon Islands, which some experts believe will allow China to build a naval base in the country located north-east of Australia.

According to a leak of a draft deal from March, the pact with the Solomons could allow China to send police and even military forces to the islands, a development that shocked the U.S and its allies in the Indo-Pacific from Australia and New Zealand to Japan.

In another sign Beijing is stepping up its push in the region, it sealed a deal with Vanuatu on Friday to upgrade an international airport in Luganville, a key U.S military base during the second world war.

A state department official said the U.S took concerns about security deals, including with Kiribati, "very seriously". He said there were fears China was also negotiating with Tonga and Vanuatu.

China is also working with Kiribati to upgrade an airstrip on the archipelago's Kanton Island.

**Nuclear expert reaffirms harm of dumping nuclear-contaminated water into ocean, calls on Japan to stop pressuring opposition voices**

TOKYO, 23 MAY 2022 (THE GLOBAL TIMES)---Experts have reaffirmed the inevitable radioactive pollution to be caused by the dumping of nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean after Japan last Wednesday initially approved the discharge plan.

They demanded the Japanese government to stop pressuring those opposed to the plan and to truly listen to concerns from domestic public and international community, as a 30-day public comment period will finally determine the fate of the plan.

The Japanese government and Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) haven't conducted a comprehensive environmental impact assessment as required by international law, Shaun Burnie, a senior nuclear specialist at Greenpeace, a global environmental protection organisation, told the Global Times.

"The contaminated water contains radioactive cesium, strontium, tritium and other radioactive substances, which could be incorporated and concentrated in marine biota and end up in the bodies of humans. Some could cause damage to DNA, while others result in higher risks of diseases such as leukemia and blood cancer," said Burnie.

The Pacific Islands Forum has expressed deep concern about Japan's decision to dump nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea and urged Japan to rethink about such a decision in April 2021.

**Covid-free Pacific islands look to rejoin the world**

PONPHEI/MAJURO, 23 MAY 2022 (MARIANAS VARIETY)---Two of the last four remaining Covid-free nations in the world are preparing to open their borders to re-join the Covid world.

The Federated States of Micronesia has announced its plan to open its borders without quarantine beginning 01 August.

Meanwhile, the Marshall Islands has gradually reduced its quarantine requirements since late last year and the country's top government administrator said Friday it is no longer "realistic and sustainable" to maintain the two-and-a-half-year border closure.

The Marshall Islands, which since March 2020 when it closed its borders to travel has maintained one of the world's strictest Covid-prevention systems, is expected to further reduce quarantine as early as next month.

FSM President David Panuelo in a statement published in the Marshall Islands Journal Friday acknowledged that opening this north Pacific nation's borders "is equivalent to purposefully choosing to introduce Covid-19."

The health departments in both the FSM and the Marshall Islands have been engaged in an aggressive Covid vaccination programme.

"A significant rationale for delaying the opening of the nation's borders until 01 August, 2022 is on the premise that the FSM's vaccination coverage is insufficient (at this time) to prevent widespread human suffering, and the overwhelming of limited medical staff and equipment across the nation," Panuelo said in his statement.

Both FSM and Marshall Islands have seen multiple so-called "border" cases of Covid in managed quarantine. But there has been no spread into their island communities due to strict rules for quarantine. All four Covid-free nations are in the Pacific. In addition to FSM and Marshall Islands, Nauru and Tuvalu remain Covid-free. Three other areas are also still Covid-free: Macao, Niue and Tokelau.

The Marshall Islands government is considering eliminating quarantine in Hawaii altogether and reducing the quarantine period in the Marshall Islands.

**France's outgoing foreign minister welcomes defeat of Scott Morrison**

PARIS, 23 MAY 2022 (THE GUARDIAN)---France's outgoing foreign affairs minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, has undiplomatically welcomed the election defeat of Australia's conservative government after a war of words last year over an abandoned submarine deal between the two countries.

Australia scrapped the purchase worth up to AUD\$90bn (US\$63 billion last September in favour of a security pact with the U.S and the UK.

Scott Morrison, the then prime minister, rejected accusations that his government had lied to France, which consequently recalled its ambassadors from the U.S and Australia as a sign of protest and said that it was informed of the pact only hours before the public announcement was made.

Le Drian made the remarks about Morrison's defeat in Saturday's elections during a ceremony in Paris in which he handed over to his successor, Catherine Colonna.

He said: "I can't stop myself from saying that the defeat of Morrison suits me very well."

**Pacific features in Humanitarian Networks, Partnerships week of meetings in Geneva**

GENEVA, 23 MAY 2022 (PACNEWS)---Pacific nations coping with climate change are expected to benefit from new partnerships and collaborations on strengthening private sector engagement, after networking and connecting at the latest annual meeting of the Connecting Business initiative (CBI) in Geneva this month.

The CBI is a collaboration between UNDP and UNOCHA. In the margins of the Annual meeting, PIF advisers met with the CBI Secretariat who are keen to explore opportunities for regional collaboration with the Pacific. The Forum team and a delegation from Fiji featured in plenary discussions across the week-long event, and shared Pacific experiences and opportunities for increased engagement of the private sector.

While COVID travel restrictions continue to impact on Pacific representation to global conferences, those at the CBI 2022 included the Fiji Director of National Disaster Management, Vasiti Soko, FCEF's representative Patricia Mallam and PIF Advisers Ledua Vakaloloma (Pacific Resilience Project) and Karlos Moresi (Resilience Development Finance).

Fiji highlighted the importance of data and key information and highlighted the added value from the recent mapping exercise for Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF), supported by the PIFS- PacRES project. The Pacific Islands Forum is also supporting the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce with its preparatory work for a Business Resilience Council.

The CBI annual meeting was part of a range of events hosted during the UNDP/UNOCHA Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW). The CBI global network members came from as far as Haiti, Sri Lanka, Peru, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, Madagascar, Turkey, Vietnam, France, Finland and from the host country Switzerland....PACNEWS

