



Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau

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SITUATION UPDATE IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

As of 1600 hours (local time) today, 24 people were confirmed dead, 7 were seriously injured, 5,409 were made homeless, and 914 houses were destroyed when a powerful earthquake which was measured at 7.6 on the Richter Scale followed by tsunami struck Gizo the capital of Western Province and other areas in Western and Choiseul provinces at about 0730 A.M on 2 March 2007. The death toll and loss of properties are expected to rise as reports from other affected areas in the two provinces have started to come in.

The National Disaster Council which is monitoring the situation and compiling the reports for the Government announced it has withdrawn the tsunami warning as of today following its assessments the threat from further tsunami has significantly reduced, however, it warned people in Western and Choiseul provinces to remain cautious. It also reported that the first shipment of relief supplies including food, water, tents, and basic medicines have been dispatched to its distribution centre at Munda in Western Province to be distributed to Gizo and other affected areas in Western and Choiseul provinces, and that people should start receiving these relief supplies as from today.

Contrary to earlier media reports, the Government will shortly be declaring Western and Choiseul provinces as "Disaster Areas" after it received the disaster assessment from the National Disaster Council.

At 3.00 P.M today, SIVB received reports from Gizo that most of the hotels, motels and resorts in Gizo and Munda experienced minor damages but remain closed for fear of further earthquakes and tsunami. A few motels in Gizo have reopened for business but are facing water and power crisis.

In Gizo and surrounding areas, fixed line telephone and GSM mobile communication are operating normally, however, Solomon Telekom reported that telephone congestions has been experienced as callers from other parts of the country and overseas were anxious to find out about the situation in Gizo and surrounding areas.

"It is too early to assess the cost of damages to tourism plants and infrastructure in Western and Choiseul provinces and to know the overall loss to the tourism industry, however, the widespread damages to buildings, properties, and infrastructure in Gizo, the popular tourist destination in Solomon Islands will impact greatly upon the tourism industry in Solomon Islands which has not fully recovered in terms of visitor numbers from the effects of the ethnic tension in 2000"



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In spite of the unfortunate situation in Gizo and the western parts of the country, the central and eastern parts of Solomon Islands are unaffected and likewise the tourism facilities and infrastructure in these areas are unaffected.

SIVB is hopeful that with the high level of assistance from the Government, business houses, traditional aid donors, and local and overseas friends pouring into Gizo and other affected areas in Western and Choiseul provinces over the next few days, the tourism industry and the country will be able to recover from the devastation within a relatively short period of time.

Michael Tokuru
General Manager
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