Tonga loses out on NZ tourism aid in plane row

Author: Ashlee Betteridge
Date: July 11, 2013

The New Zealand government is reportedly suspending millions of dollars in tourism aid to Tonga after concerns about the safety of planes gifted to the country by China.

The safety record of the Xian MA60 has recently been in the spotlight after a number of incidents in Indonesia and Myanmar.

"Until all of the safety certification has been undertaken to a high standard we’ve got things on hold, it’s as simple as that," New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully told Islands Business.

Meanwhile, Tonga’s opposition leader has said this week that the kingdom is too reliant on aid and remittances, thereby sapping the country’s sense of initiative. He called for more democratic reform to promote accountability. (Tonga’s Legislative Assembly is composed of a mix of representatives of the people, and of Nobles.)