

Yap's "Christmas Night at the Museum" even bigger this year

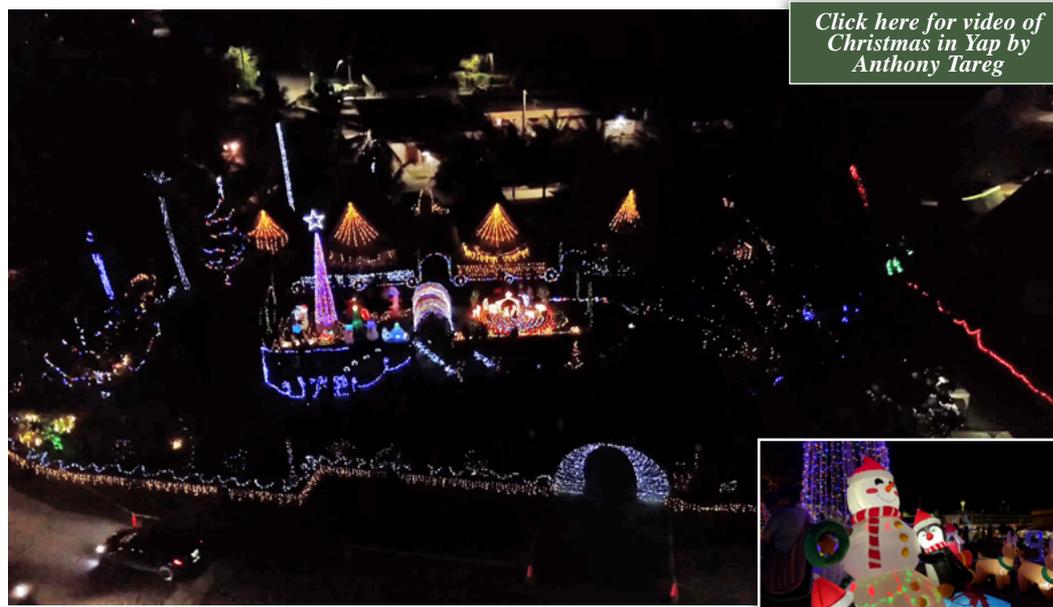
By Bill Jaynes
 The Kaselehlie Press

December 27, 2021

Colonia, Yap—Between December 21 and 25, hundreds of people in Yap descended on the ground of the Yap Living History Museum for an even bigger and more extravagant "Christmas Night at the Museum", the Christmas lighting and decoration extravaganza that made the front page of that last year's issue of The Kaselehlie Press.

The "Christmas Night at the Museum" began initially as the brain child of Leo Pugram who says that he wanted to lift the people of Yap's spirits during the pandemic lock down last Christmas. He said that he told his Dad about the idea in 2019 but that even while telling his father, he wasn't all that serious about actually doing it. Leo's father passed away later that year and then the coronavirus pandemic locked down all of the FSM, including Yap. Leo got serious.

He had been fortunate to have been other places outside of Yap during the Holidays where he saw extravagant Christmas displays, something



[Click here for video of Christmas in Yap by Anthony Tareg](#)

he had never seen on the Island growing up. He wanted to share that experience with the community and decided to use his travel budget money to buy Christmas lights and decorations to light up the Museum. He launched the idea to the Yap Visitors Bureau, purchased lights with his own funds, and started a "Go Fund Me" to help with the growing expenses for the project.

The event was so popular that plans were made for an even bigger display this year. Many volunteers stopped by to help put up the displays and helped to make it a true community event. In addition to a larger display area, there were vendors selling sweet treats for the occasion, and Santa Claus made his appearance to a roaring crowd on Christmas eve.

"I would have not been able to do all of that if it was not for my O'Keefe's Family and everyone who came out to help. It took us a whole week to put all the lights up and decorate the Museum, we had the lights up every night for five nights and after the fifth night we took it all down," he said. "It only took us one day to take down the lights. Even though it was a lot of work and a lot of expenses, it was totally worth it. Seeing everyone, especially the kids with bright smiles on their faces made it all worth it, every penny and every drop of sweat."

The National Government's response to allegations & charges regarding its macroeconomist consultant

FSM Information Services

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is aware that a consultant to the Government, Mr. Rob Solomon, who serves as the Nation's macroeconomist, had recently been arrested based on criminal information that was filed at the Pohnpei Supreme Court. To the knowledge of the FSM National Government, obtained through publicly available documentation

via Pohnpei Supreme Court's case numbers 2021-00778 and 2021-00999, Mr. Solomon is facing multiple criminal charges, and/or allegations, inclusive of charges of trafficking in persons, sexual servitude of a minor/s, criminal solicitation, prostitution, sexual abuse, and kidnapping, among others.

The FSM National Government's Executive Branch, in its

respect of the separation of powers and deference to the State Government within which Mr. Solomon has been charged, has no formal comments to make regarding Mr. Solomon's innocence or guilt, which shall be determined in a court of law.

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Yap Governor Falan removed from office

By Joyce McClure
Pacific Island Times

December 17, 2021

Yap, FSM--The Yap State Legislature got the eight votes needed to remove Gov. Henry Falan from office during their third regular session on Dec. 16.

The vote came two months after a failed vote was taken on Oct. 19 in which seven legislators voted for and three against the resolution seeking Falan's removal from office for misfeasance and malfeasance. Sen. Joseph B. Tiuchemal, one of three who voted against the resolution, cast the swing vote on Thursday by switching to "yes." Sens. Theodore Rutun and Nicholas Figirlaarwon stood by their original vote of "no."

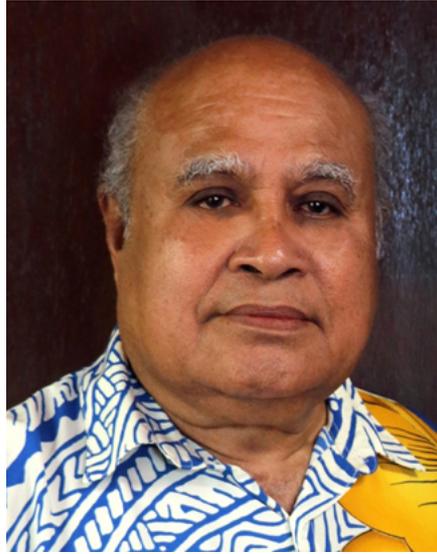
By law, 75 percent is required to pass a vote, or eight out of the 10 members.

Nearly two hours into the 10th Legislature's regular session, the motion to reconsider was presented and approved.

"We should be discussing things in order to move forward when things are not working well. We have to come together and discuss things. It's rooted in our customs and tradition. But it seems we neglect that part of our upbringing," Figirlaarwon said.

"That's what the people want us to do--work together, talk to each other. But it seems we don't want to talk," he added.

Figirlaarwon noted the committee's failure to act on a bill that proposed to raise the salary of the attorney general.



"I'm hoping we meet and discuss this before we rock the boat one more time because we're here to solve the problem," he added.

Figirlaarwon reminded his colleagues of their responsibilities as elected leaders. "We're not voted to sit on this chair to create more problems or put fuel to the problem," he said. "We adopted our laws from the U.S. but we have to deal with it in the Yapese way of doing things."

Speaker Figir responded, "We are here to uphold the constitution and if that has been broken, it's our responsibility to deal with it the way we were mandated."

The resolution passed after 13 minutes of discussion.

The impeachment resolution was introduced in September on the heels of the governor's move to temporarily shut down the Attorney General's Office due to the legislature's refusal to approve the salaries of the two attorneys general.

Salalu to be sworn in as Yap's new governor following Falan's ouster

By Joyce McClure
Pacific Island Times

December 24, 2021

Yap, FSM--Lt. Gov. Jesse J. Salalu will be sworn in as governor of Yap on Dec. 29 amid a public petition for Henry S. Falan's reinstatement.

The Yap State Legislature removed Falan from office on Dec. 16, accusing him of "malfeasance and misfeasance."

On Thursday, the FSM Supreme Court in Pohnpei denied Falan's motion to invalidate the legislature's action. An appeal is being considered.

The motion was filed by Falan's legal counsel, Marstella Jack, on Dec. 17.

After the first failed attempt to remove Falan, senators voted 8-2 in favor of the resolution that stemmed from the governor's move on Sept. 16 to temporarily shut down the Office of the Attorney General.

It is not yet known who will fill the role of Lt. governor.

The next regular election is only 11 months away in November 2022.

The Yap State Code specifies that whenever a vacancy occurs in the Office of Lieutenant Governor, it is to be filled by appointment by the governor, after consultation with the traditional Council of Pilung and the Council of Tamol upon the advice and consent of the legislature.

If the legislature does not confirm the nomination within 20 days, it is deemed to have been withdrawn. The



A public outcry against the legislature's action of removal has resulted in a petition to rescind the resolution and reinstate Falan.

"We demand the immediate reinstatement of Henry S. Falan to the office of governor of the State of Yap. If this is not done post haste, proceedings will be initiated to recall members of the Yap State Legislature from office," reads the petition initiated by the Concerned Citizens of Yap.

The petitioners said the legislature's accusations "have no merit and are not equated with the charge of malfeasance and misfeasance. At no time was the public called to testify."

In addition to being posted online for digital signatures, the petition is being circulated among Yap citizens in Hawaii, Guam and the main island of Yap. As of this writing, close to 300 people had signed the online petition.

One in a line of attempts to impede Falan's agenda and programs and remove him from office, the unstated basis for the legislature's actions is seen by many as

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Bill Jaynes
Managing Editor

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THE KASELEHLIE PRESS
WILL BE RELEASED ON:

January 12, 2021

Deadline for submission of articles or advertisements for this issue is the end of working hours on:

Monday, January 10, 2021

No, the U.S. and the FSM have NOT agreed to build a military base in the FSM

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

December 28, 2021

FSM—A July 28 article written by Pacific Island Times Editor Mar-Vic Carangan claimed “US, FSM reach consensus on a plan to build military base in Micronesia”. The editor’s bold claim was immediately picked up internationally as fact when in fact, it was speculation and was incorrect then and is incorrect now. Yet, the article remains online and is still occasionally reposted by concerned FSM citizens on social media and elsewhere, as occurred within the last two weeks on the social media group “FSM Forum”.

The idea seems to have been based on one sentence in an FSM Press Release after high level defense talks between the US and the FSM at INDOPACOM in Hawaii in mid-July. “The FSM and the United States collaborated on plans for more frequent and permanent U.S. Armed Forces presence, and have agreed to cooperate on how that presence will be built up both temporarily and permanently within the FSM, with the purpose of serving the mutual security interests of both nations,” it said.

FSM spokesperson Richard Clark confirmed that such an agreement never happened. He said that the agreement was merely to have an increased US

Armed Forces presence. As example of that type of presence, Clark pointed out that during the time of the visit to the U.S. Armed Forces Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), the President attended the launching ceremony for three new U.S. Coast Guard cutters that were assigned to the Micronesia region and are now based in Guam. The U.S. has agreed to step up its presence in the region, but that does not mean a military base.

“I think there is a little confusion,” Rear Admiral Benjamin Nicholson, the commander of Joint Region Marianas said in an interview with NewsTalk K57’s Patti Arroyo quoted in an article two months after the visit. “There’s not a permanent base that is going there, at least not one that is planned right now. But we are looking at where we can best operate in the Federated States of Micronesia, where we might be able to put forces temporarily either for an exercise or an operation, but not be permanently stationed there. We’re looking at a number of places in the region as well ... where the best place is to position forces, maybe not permanently but temporarily for an exercise or if we want to go through an operation where we want to distribute our forces throughout the region, where are the best places to do that from.”

The FSM’s governmental structure does not give control over land to the National



Pictured Above: His Excellency David W. Panuelo shakes hands with INDOPACOM Deputy Commander Lieutenant General Michael Minihan (Image Source: INDOPACOM)

Government. That power is held by each of the four FSM States, who were not present at the meeting in July and have made no overtures whatsoever to the US Government asking them to build a base.

The United States already did, in fact increase presence in the FSM, even if only marginally with the addition of a position at the US Embassy in the FSM of military attaché. The agreement between the FSM and the United States at the July Joint Committee Meeting was merely to

find ways to increase engagement.

The FSM’s press release points out, “the mission of INDOPACOM is to protect and defend, in concert with other U.S. Government agencies, the territory of the United States, its people, and its interests. Through the Compact of Free Association, as Amended, the United States is responsible for the FSM’s defense.” However, there are no plans to build a base in the FSM.

Opening of UN Multi-Country Office celebrated with reception

The Kaselehlie Press

December 16, 2021

Pohnpei, FSM—United Nations Resident Coordinator Jaap van Hierden hosted a reception to commemorate the opening of the UN Multi-Country Office in Pohnpei this evening at Mangrove Bay Bar and Grill. The arrival of the Mr. van Hierden in Yap to establish the office is the culmination of many months of lobbying at the United Nations to establish a multi-country office to cover the Micronesian region.

Unfortunately, neither FSM President David Panuelo nor Pohnpei State Governor Reed Oliver was able to attend the reception due to previously

scheduled and important family engagements. Peteriko Hairens spoke on behalf of the Governor and FSM Secretary for Foreign Affairs Kandhi Elieisar spoke on behalf of the President.

Previously Mr. van Hierden has said that he spent a good deal of his career either working in Civil Society Organizations or closely with them, and so asked that they be represented during

the ceremony. Micronesia Conservation Trust Executive Director Willy Kostka spoke on their behalf.

Van Hierden said that the establishment of the office is a dream come true for the region and he and his staff will work to

advocate for the people of Micronesia. He said that he expects to have a permanent physical building in which to house the office by some time early next year.



All three FSM Swimmers set new FSM records at World Swimming Championships

By Susan Kihleng

December 28, 2021

Abu Dhabi—From December 16 to 21, 2021, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, was host to the 15th FINA World Swimming Championships. This event is the bi-annual short course swimming championships, which uses a 25-meter length swimming pool rather than the 50-meter length used for the Olympics and long course championships. These championships had been postponed from a year ago due to Covid-19 cancellations, and at long last, the majority of the best swimmers in the world gathered to race for new world titles.

Among these top swimmers in the world were three of our own FSM swimmers: Tasi Limtiaco, Jourdyn Adams, and Taeyanna Adams. Tasi Limtiaco and Taeyanna Adams represented the FSM this past summer in Tokyo at the Olympic Games. The results from these three swimmers in Abu Dhabi demonstrate how hard work and training can pay off in the pool as we saw an astounding five new FSM National Records set at this competition.

Tasi Limtiaco, who has continued training at Thanyapura Training Center in Thailand since the Olympics, was the first of the FSM swimmers to compete. His first race, the 200 Meter Individual Medley, was the same race he swam in Tokyo, yet we saw a new FSM National Record as he shaved a full two seconds off his time with a finish of 2:05.06. Tasi

completed his swims in Abu Dhabi with the 100 Meter Individual Medley, setting yet another FSM National Record with a time of 57.05. It should also be noted that Limtiaco's remarkable times are not only FSM National Records but records in these events across the entire Micronesian region.

Taeyanna Adams, who has been training at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill since the Olympics, was next of our FSM swimmers to race, starting with the 50 Meter Breaststroke. Another new FSM National Record was set, as she finished this race with a time of 36.11. Taeyanna's second race was the 100 Meter Breaststroke, a repeat of the race she swam at the Olympics in Tokyo. Here she dropped her time by nearly five seconds off her Olympic time, finishing in 1:20.90, another extraordinary FSM National Record.

Our final swimmer to take to the pool was Jourdyn Adams, who has been training with the Baylor University Swim Club in Texas. Her first swim saw yet another new FSM National Record in the 100 Meter Freestyle with an incredible finish of 1:05.25. Jourdyn's final swim in Abu Dhabi was the 50 Meter Backstroke, in which she set an impressive personal best of time of 33.95.

Each of these swims was beyond impressive, but the fact that they were accomplished amid a worldwide pandemic presenting multiple challenges these young athletes have had to overcome makes these accomplishments even more outstanding. The team, accompanied by Coach "Ataka" Akifumi Takahashi and FSM Swimming Association President Mae Bruton-Adams, has now all returned safely to their current homes. The next international competition

Photos by Coach "Ataka" Akifumi Takahashi



FSM Swimming will be participating in will be the long course World Championships in Fukuoka, Japan in May of 2022.

For photos and videos of the competition, see FSM Swimming Facebook page @www.facebook.com/FSMSwimming

...Macroeconomist

Continued from front page

Mr. Solomon is presumed innocent until proven guilty. However, the National Government's Executive Branch, in its respect of the gravity of the charges and allegations, has immediately and indefinitely suspended Mr. Solomon from his duties under his consultant's contract with the FSM National Government, which will result in termination if he is found guilty of any of the charges against him.

"In July 2019," His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the FSM, said in a statement, "At the first Anti-Human Trafficking Conference, I declared the

theme of 'Through collaboration and unity, we can combat human trafficking in the FSM.' I noted that if persons come to the FSM to exploit our youth, that they have come to the wrong country. In September 2019, through a Presidential Order, the Panuelo-George administration created the Division of Anti-Human Trafficking at our Department of Justice. In my inaugural address, I reaffirmed our Nation's commitment to the international rules-based order. We recently joined the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and part of the reason to do so is to help ensure that the FSM plays a responsible role in its own national security, as well as regional and international security. To say it out loud: that includes the right of children to be free from any form of abuse or suffering, at the hands of any person or

persons, or any organization."

"I have full faith and confidence in the Pohnpei State Government to conduct its work fairly and appropriately, and I equally have full trust and confidence in the judicial branches at both the National and State levels to fulfill their duties to the highest degree of honor in the search for truth and the delivery of justice. I have no comments to make regarding Mr. Solomon at this time, though I note he is presumed innocent until proven guilty. I can however categorically guarantee that, as of today, his employment with the National Government is suspended pending the resolution of his cases."

"The first main idea I want to make clear is that the children of our country cannot be exploited by any person or organization.

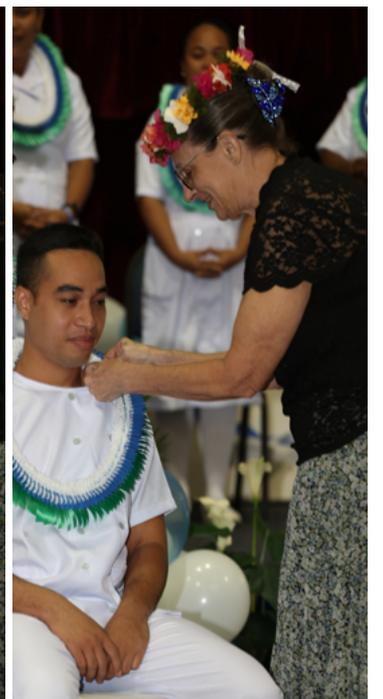
The second main idea I want to make clear is that the Government, which is comprised of people, is imperfect; we need your help, the People of the FSM, in gathering information, so that we can take the right action for our country. Our national reticence to speak out when we see wrongdoing can prolong harm; I encourage you all, that if you see something, to please also say something. There is never shame in being a victim of abuse, but there is always shame in abusive behavior itself. Speaking up takes courage, but it is a brave and important act that all men and women, and all boys and girls, should feel confident to take because it is the right thing to do. No one should ever feel fear, and no one should ever be harmed, when they reside on or visit our shores, least of all our children."



74th Commencement Exercises



8th NURSING PROGRAM Pinning and Capping Ceremony



FSM and Australia finalise agreement for new patrol boats in 2022

Marine Surveillance Advisers

FSM and Australia have reached an important milestone in preparations for the handover of FSM's new Guardian-class Patrol Boats in 2022. On 21 December representatives from the Royal Australian Navy, Maritime Surveillance Adviser LCDR David Perry and recently appointed Technical Adviser CPO Daniel Ryan, formally presented Attorney General Joses R. Gallen with the signed Memorandum of Understanding for the provision and support of the new vessels.

Under the agreement between the Department of Justice and Australia's Department of Defence, Australia and FSM will work together to support the

operation and maintenance of the new Guardian-class Patrol Boats under the Pacific Maritime Security Program.

FSM's Pacific-class Patrol Boats FSS Micronesia and FSS Independence will sail back to Australia for disposal in January 2022 after decades in service with the Division of Border Control and Maritime Surveillance since being handed over in 1990 and 1997 respectively. "This is an important step," said CMDR Steward Peter, Chief of the Division of Border Control and Maritime Surveillance. "I know the commissioning crew are excited to be bringing this new vessel back to FSM to continue to provide surveillance of our EEZ and rapid response to maritime safety incidents."

The first Guardian-class Patrol Boat, FSS Tosiwo Nakayama, is expected to arrive in Pohnpei in May 2022. The second vessel will be handed over in July 2022 after the disposal of the final Pacific-class Patrol Boat, FSS Palikir.

With ongoing technical and advisory support, the new Guardian-class Patrol Boats will represent an uninterrupted 60 year commitment to the security of FSM and its Pacific neighbours by Australia. The Guardian-class Patrol Boats are a significant upgrade to FSM's maritime law enforcement and disaster response capability; they are larger (129 feet long), faster (up to 23 miles per hour), and designed to support a mixed-gender crew. FSM will be the tenth Pacific nation to receive a Guardian-class Patrol Boat under Australia's Pacific Maritime Security Program, which also provides aerial surveillance through the Forum Fisheries Agency, and funding for regional maritime patrols.



...Salalu

Continued from page 2

the support of Chinese developers from PRC by Speaker Vincent Figir, other senators and members of the Council of Pilung.

Figir is also chairman of the Yap-China Friendship Association. Several years ago, when Deng Hong, CEO of ETG, arrived in Yap with a proposal for a large resort and casino, Louis Lukan, a member of the COP, refused to accept a \$3,000 "gift" proffered to the council by the company.

Falan, on the other hand, has publicly supported U.S. involvement in Yap and invited the military to establish a presence on the island. The military is currently preparing to renovate the island's airport with a \$37 million grant from the Federal Aviation Authority.

When invited by Chinese developers on an all-expenses-paid trip to Beijing with a travel companion soon after his inauguration, Falan flatly refused the offer.

Falan expressed his dismay at those senators who "got where they are today" by being "educated by America in America." "They have turned their backs" on America's generosity and support, he said. "I just don't understand how they can do that."

The Yap State Legislature has refused requests to speak with the media.

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May your Christmas sparkle with love, laughter and goodwill,
And may the year ahead be full of contentment and joy!
The Board, Management and Employees of FSMTC extends a very
Merry Christmas and the Happiest of New Years in 2022!
We greatly appreciate your support this year and hoping for
your continued support in 2022.



Micronesian US immigrant takes creativity a “Step Above”

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

December 27, 2021

Alexandria, Virginia—Many FSM citizens migrate to the United States and do well for themselves. Meeyoung Kim is one of those, and she’s not only done well for herself and her growing family, she continues to do well on behalf of Micronesian immigrants in ways she never expected to do.



Born in Kosrae and raised in Pohnpei, like many Micronesians, Kim is hesitant to talk about herself. Five years ago, after seeing some of her early work on her personal Facebook page, we reached out to her for an interview. At that time, she said she wasn’t ready and didn’t want to be seen as bragging. A few days ago, we reached out again. This time she said that if her story could inspire young Micronesian women in particular, she would tell us some of her story.

“I am just so humbly thankful and grateful for this journey I endured as a hard-working immigrant from Micronesia making a dream of mine a reality,” Kim said.

Seven years ago, when she relocated in the United States to Virginia, she had an Associate Degree in Accounting from The College of Micronesia FSM and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Management from Park University. At the time she only had five dollars in her pocket, a dream for a post-graduate degree and a willingness to work hard. She also had a job as a kindergarten substitute teacher.

While working as a substitute teacher, along with another job, she completed a Master’s Degree in Leadership and Management at Webster University. She also found a new love besides her three children, Ian, Travis, and Troy and her husband, Robinson Tawerimal of Woleai, Yap. She now focuses a lot of her attention on real estate staging, the art of interior design to make a home more attractive to potential buyers.

“My parents wanted me to be an economist or a public servant. Interior design was never in my mind,” she said. “I did not go to interior design school. I was naturally born and gifted

with a creative mindset.” It was a mindset, not actually genetically inborn but fostered at the feet of her father, as they refurbished old furniture into new when she was young. As she grew older, she practiced redesigning her friends’ homes in the U.S. which led to her passion for interior design. “Those of us born in the islands have a value of strong work ethics and a willingness to learn as immigrants.”

A year after moving to Alexandria, Virginia, she enrolled in a course to become an Accredited Staging Professional (ASP). In 2020, a company found her work online and asked her if she would be willing to serve as an intern. After six weeks of interning for Step Above Staging, the company offered her a contract as a Lead Stager as a subcontractor. She jumped at the opportunity.

“The first project they gave me was a condo valued at \$1.3 million in the heart of Washington DC,” she said. “I will never forget that day when I walked into the property. I was pinching myself to see if it was real. My hands were shaking putting in the lockbox code (to get inside). I literally cried driving home, because my dream had come true after so many trials of job turn downs.”

“In the first six months, our staging work was featured in The Washington Post. That was a surreal moment to see all the hard work I did manifesting itself,” she exclaimed. Last year Meeyoung and her team staged 150 properties, by far exceeding their goal. Her work is featured on the Step Above Staging Instagram page as well as her own business page, www.stagedhomes.com/mkinterior

Kim still works as a substitute teacher as



she has time but last year she only had time to do it three or four times due to her workload as a real estate stager in Maryland, Washington D.C. and Virginia.

“Mee Young is the lead stager at Step Above Staging. She is amazing at what she does. She has a natural eye for design and is very detail oriented. Mee will always go the extra mile to make sure the job is done to our standards and the clients’ specifications. We are so blessed to have her on our team and see her moving up as our company continues to grow,” wrote Nichelle Turner and Sharlene Flood, co-owners of Step Above Staging.

If personal work success was all that Meeyoung had going for her it might possibly be enough, but she also has served as an advocate of Micronesian issues. In April of 2018, Leonardo DeCaprio “re-grammed” (Instagram) a photo of her and her son for her advocacy on climate change issues.

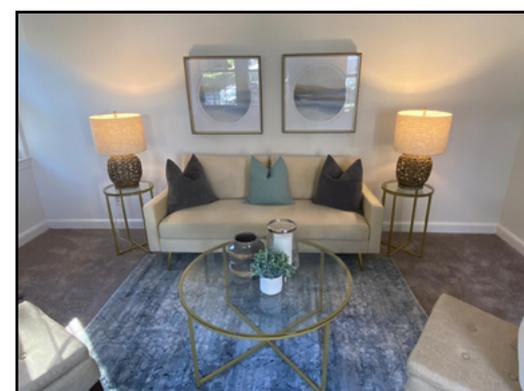
During graduate school, she also served as a volunteer advocate with the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders during FSM President Christian’s term.

Kim has not finished dreaming. “I want this story to cultivate and motivate many young Micronesian women born and raised in Micronesia to pursue their education wherever they go. I want them to know that they are worthy and that anything is possible if they put their

minds into it even if they were born and raised in Micronesia,” and perhaps especially so, she said.

“Education is the biggest step to conquering a step of a dream. Never forget your humble beginnings, because it will make you the most unique person among the diverse cultures you will face. Stars in life will always align where your heart desires,” she said. “Forget marriage in your 20s, go live life and chase your books before boys. The most fulfilling part of my journey is that love found me again, and I treasure my family so much.”

She has another dream that she calls “wild”. She wants to do the interior design work for all of the Pacific Island Embassies in Washington D.C. Those embassies could not possibly hope for better.



Pacific Collective opposes Japanese Government utility company's plans to dump radioactive waste in the Pacific Ocean

The Pacific Collective on Nuclear Issues (the Collective) representing Pacific civil society organisations (CSOs) strongly opposes the plans of the Japanese Government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, Inc. (TEPCO) to discharge 1.28 million tonnes of radioactive water into the Pacific Ocean from 2023.

The Collective refutes the veracity of a number of premises advanced by the Radiological Impact Assessment (RIA) released by Japanese utility company, TEPCO, on 17th November 2021, to release nuclear materials from the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

The Pacific is not and must not become the dumping ground for nuclear wastes. Therefore, we reject TEPCO's RIA on several grounds, as outlined below:

- Objections to the Design of the Radiological Impact Assessment, including the ongoing disregard of concerns raised by Pacific leaders, governments and the Pacific Islands Forum, limited timeframe for public comments and need for an

Environmental Impact Assessment in addition to a Radiological Impact Assessment.

- Global Effects on Peoples and the Environment with a specific focus on the Pacific Ocean and Pacific interests safeguarding our environmental stewardship, human health and food security.
- Contravention of Nuclear-Free Pacific International Laws and Treaties that ensure no further harm to the Pacific peoples and environment.

The Collective considers that TEPCO, and the relevant Japanese Government agencies, have wrongly prioritised convenience and costs over the short term and long term environmental and human cost of their planned actions.

The Collective calls TEPCO and the Japanese Government to embark on a comprehensive reassessment of their entire decommissioning plan.

The Collective further believes TEPCO's plans for using an Advanced Liquid

Processing System (ALPS) method to "treat highly radioactive wastewater to safe levels" for discharge into the Pacific Ocean must be abandoned, and an alternative plan developed as a matter of urgency and in principle, to cause no harm to people or the environment.

We recommend the following:

1. That the Japanese Government and TEPCO abandon the use of the Pacific Ocean as a dumping ground for its radioactive wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, to ensure that no further harm is caused to the Pacific Ocean, its environment and its peoples.

2. The Japanese Government and TEPCO acts in consultation with Pacific leaders and allows an independent expert review to be undertaken and overseen by the Pacific Islands Forum. Furthermore, no proposal for the discharge of such large volumes of liquid radioactive waste should be permitted in the absence of an ocean-wide Environmental Impact Assessment and the collection of relevant radiological baseline data for all

areas likely to be affected.

3. All appropriate alternative measures are considered by the Japanese Government and TEPCO to prevent, abate and eliminate to the fullest extent possible, the pollution of the Pacific Ocean by radioactive water, including exploring all options for maintaining storage facilities on land for the radioactive wastewater. An urgent comprehensive reassessment of the decommission plan is necessary as the first step. This should include all alternative options for safe containment, storage as well as identification of technologies that can safely treat radioactive material including the radioactive waste water proposed to be discharged into the Pacific Ocean under the current proposal.

4. A better process is designed for consultation as called for by Pacific leaders and regional institutions, between the Government of Japan and its closest neighbours including Pacific Island governments and also ensuring citizens' participation.



His Excellency Hisashi Michigami, Ambassador of Japan to the FSM, presents credentials to His Excellency David W. Panuelo

FSM Information Services

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—On December 15th, 2021, His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), received His Excellency Hisashi Michigami, the newly accredited Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of Japan to the FSM. After the Presentation of Credentials ceremony, the President and the Ambassador exchanged brief remarks and then engaged in a discussion on matters of mutual interest and import.

In his formal statement after presenting his credentials, Ambassador Michigami passed on His Majesty, the Emperor's greetings, regards, and hopes for friendly and cooperative relations between the FSM and Japan. Ambassador Michigami described his keen interest to make a modest contribution to the FSM's development, and solicited the FSM National Government's close cooperation and advice in order to ensure such a contribution is as beneficial as possible.

In his formal statement following the Ambassador's, President Panuelo requested that the Ambassador relay his best wishes for His Majesty, the Emperor's good health, his best wishes for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his good health, and the good health and longevity of both the People and Nation of Japan.

The President described that the FSM and Japan have nearly reached 34 years of formal diplomatic relations, and have more than 100 years of traditional relations. The President described the Nation's deep and sincere appreciation for historical, ongoing, and forthcoming Japanese development assistance to the FSM, such as the work of the Japan International Cooperation Association (JICA) and their Volunteers; the FY2020 Economic & Social Development program, resulting in support to the Fisheries & Maritime Institute in Yap State, medical equipment, and the purchasing of fuel; people-to-people cultural and cooperative exchanges, including scholarship programs; and the outcomes of the PALM-9 Summit wherein the President requested, and the FSM has since received, a JMAS team working in Chuuk State with the goal of tackling oil leaks.

Additionally, President Panuelo highlighted the Nation's keen interest in forthcoming assistance from Japan, such as four small patrol boats (one each for the State of Yap, the State of Chuuk, the State of Pohnpei, and the State of Kosrae) to augment the receipt of Guardian-class vessels from Australia; the expansion of Pohnpei State's commercial and fisheries dock; a replacement vessel for the MV Caroline Voyager; and water system upgrades.

President Panuelo emphasized that the FSM is committed to a Free & Open Indo-Pacific and the Indo-Pacific Strategy, and spoke at length of the Nation's immense gratitude for the recent announcement of Japan's, Australia's, and the United States' assistance to fund a fiber optic cable that will ultimately improve internet accessibility and speed in the FSM State of Kosrae, the Republic of Kiribati, and the Republic of Nauru. The President reiterated that the FSM remains committed to expanding the United Nations Security Council as a larger part of the United Nations' reforms, and further that it is the view of the FSM that Japan must become a permanent member of such an expanded United Nations Security Council.

Following their formal remarks, President Panuelo and Ambassador Michigami engaged in a private discussion with topics ranging from an analysis of important events across the Indo-Pacific over the course of 2021 to a discussion on generating cooperation amongst the Nation's friends, allies, and development partners. Regarding the latter, President Panuelo extensively probed the Ambassador's previous experience as the Secretary-General of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (where promotes cooperation between Japan, the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of Korea).

President Panuelo shared with Ambassador Michigami, and later remarked to his Cabinet—and requested public release thereof—of his appreciation for Ambassador Michigami's, and Deputy Chief of Mission Kentaro Mizuuchi's, deep humility and polished demeanor, professional background, and interest in strengthening the FSM-Japan Kizuna.

The FSM National Government is enthusiastic to partner with Ambassador



Michigami and the People and the FSM-Japan Kizuna, or Special Bond, Government of Japan in strengthening to new heights.

TUNE IN TO POHNPEI'S #1 RADIO

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R.S. Roque Architects and Construction Services gave 185 students at Wone School an early Christmas present

*Alvie B. Cabañez
Kaselehlie Press
Volunteer Contributor*

R.S. Roque Architects and Construction Services distributed 185 school bags enclosed with school supplies and toiletries. They also gave away light snacks and a number of dishes during the outreach program held at Wone School last December 21, 2021. They also gave the faculty and staff Christmas bags enclosed with toiletries. R.S. Roque also donated approximately 3 feet by 6 feet school signage.

The team was welcomed by the parents, guardians, faculty & staff with the students in their red shirt and Santa Claus hat. The short program was opened by Charles Amputen, Principal, Wone School. "On behalf of the faculty and staff of Wone School and the P.T.A officers, thank you very much R.S. Roque for your generosity," he said. The students gleefully recited the school's mission and vision in unison much to the surprise of the crowd. The crowd was also entertained by a song number from selected Grade 1 and Grade 5 students to the tune of Feliz Navidad and We Wish You



a Merry Christmas. It was followed by the distribution of gift bags to the students, faculty and staff. The event was initiated by Marson Rosario, President, Parents & Teachers Association (P.T.A). He partnered with R.S Roque Architects and Construction Services and came up with a plan.

Through this event, Architect Ryan S. Roque, owner of R.S Roque Architects and Construction Services, hopes that each student will have a joyous celebration of the holiday season and gain appreciation of their ability to impact the school community in positive ways. The team walked away with a truck load of fruits and vegetables like local bananas, coconuts, soursop, papayas, and leafy vegetables given by the school community.

As a family business, R.S. Roque Architects and Construction Services



has worked with different sectors for decades. They have acquired invaluable knowledge and experience in designing a package of signage, construction needs, and commercial arts that meets both the customers

expectations and budget.

Wone School is a public elementary school located in Kitti Municipality, Pohnpei, Micronesia.

ADB, Cook Islands sign \$80 million financing to support economic recovery

Asian Development Bank

December 16, 2021

MANILA, PHILIPPINES—The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of the Cook Islands signed an \$80 million loan agreement to help the Pacific country's economy transition from recovery to sustainable, private sector-led growth.

ADB will help the Cook Islands pursue reforms to improve public financial management and foster private sector activities. The Supporting Sustainable Recovery Program will provide an initial \$40 million to meet immediate financing needs, and

up to \$40 million as a precautionary financing option, which will allow the government to access critical funds for public sector operations, services to vulnerable households, and private sector recovery if economic and fiscal conditions deteriorate.

"We appreciate the ongoing support provided by the Asian Development Bank during this unprecedented time," said the Cook Islands' Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Mark Brown. "This program supports the government's efforts to guard against the worst impacts of the economic downturn and position us for a strong recovery moving forward."

These reforms will help better manage the country's fiscal and cash position, improve tax compliance, reopen the economy, ease labor shortages, improve business registration, and promote competition.

"The program is the culmination of years of close support and collaboration with the government, as well as recent efforts to address the economic impacts of COVID-19," said ADB Director General for the Pacific Leah Gutierrez. "The precautionary financing option allows the Cook Islands to better manage the uncertainty surrounding the recovery

and its impacts on the government's financing needs."

The program builds on the NZ\$31.3 (around \$21.49 million) COVID-19 response funding and assistance ADB provided to the Cook Islands in 2020, as well as a range of technical assistance provided to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.

Spanish Wall transforms into a Christmas themed park

Alvie B. Cabañez

Kaselehlie Press Volunteer Contributor

The FSM Government through the initiative of Election District 1 Congressman Ferny Perman solicited the help of the United Filipino Community in Pohnpei (UFCP) to decorate the park at the Spanish Wall. The Christmas Lighting decoration project was given \$15,000 budget to transform the park into a festive field of lights to feel the spirit of Christmas amidst the pandemic.



UFCP officers didn't waste any time and contacted well-meaning individuals and groups to help in the implementation of the design. R.S. Roque Architects & Construction Services crafted the design. The design was very intricate but not too flashy. It highlighted the life-sized Christmas manger, a giant Christmas star, a towering Christmas Tree, the glittering Merry Christmas & Happy New Year, and the I Love Pohnpei sign. The materials used ranges from welded stars, metal fabrication, long and winding extension wires, and countless radiant lights, rope lights and the usual Christmas lights.



Volunteers gathered during weeknights especially the R.S. Roque Construction to complete the main attraction. The UFCP officers assisted in setting the Christmas lights, the life-sized Christmas manger, securing the wirings, and preparing light snacks and meals to the volunteers. The weeklong Christmas decoration created a buzz among locals and can't wait to take pictures of the themed park. The I Love Pohnpei sign and the towering Christmas Tree were the blockbuster attraction. It will be opened to the public until January 15, 2022.



The Filipino community is not only honored to be part of this project but at the same time jubilant. The Christmas Lighting Decoration was only fitting since the United Filipino Community in Pohnpei is celebrating its 37th Charter Day Anniversary. The FSM government granted UFCP its Charter on December 09, 1984. It was signed by then FSM President Tosiwo Nakayama.

The UFCP 37th Charter Day only means that the Filipino community will stay committed and continue to strive in forging diplomatic ties with the FSM government.

\$5 Million in Economic Development Administration American Rescue Plan Funding to support Territory-wide Economic Development Planning

Grants for 5 Territories will lay the foundation for President Biden's Build Back Better Agenda

U.S. Economic Development Administration

December 22, 2021

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo today announced that the Department's Economic Development Administration (EDA) is awarding American Rescue Plan statewide planning grants to five territories to support territory-wide economic development planning efforts.

The funding will assist communities in their efforts to build back better by accelerating the economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and building local economies that will be resilient to future economic shocks, boost economic development, enhance U.S. competitiveness, combat the climate crisis, and recover from the pandemic.

Projects vary in scope based on locally driven needs. For example, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands will utilize this funding to identify economic assets and resources to develop action plans to strengthen their economies. Additionally, the Republic of Palau will use the funding to incentivize business growth in Babeldaob, sustainably manage tourism or cultural sites, improve mobile and broadband coverage, and train businesses on pandemic safety.

With this announcement, all 59 states and territories have been awarded approximately \$1 million grants through EDA's Statewide Planning program—one of six programs EDA developed to equitably distribute its \$3 billion in American Rescue Plan funding.

"The Biden Administration is providing

states and territories the unprecedented opportunity to bring their communities together to develop comprehensive plans to build back better and stronger," said Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo. "These Statewide Planning grants will be used to lay the groundwork for President Biden's broader agenda to build resilient economies and increase U.S. competitiveness."

"Planning is the backbone of economic development and building back better," said Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Alejandra Y. Castillo. "EDA is proud to partner with state and territory leaders as they begin to tackle a wide range of challenges – including workforce training, business recruitment, capital access, infrastructure, broadband, entrepreneurial growth, economic diversification, and pandemic

recovery – and develop a comprehensive plan for their entire state or territory that ensures communities work together toward a common economic development vision for the future."

The following territories were awarded grants today:

- Federated States of Micronesia (\$1 million)
- Northern Mariana Islands (\$999,755)
- Republic of the Marshall Islands (\$1 million)
- Republic of Palau (\$996,728)
- United States Virgin Islands (\$1 million)

For more about EDA's Statewide Planning grant and other American Rescue Plan programs, please visit: <https://www.eda.gov/arpa/>.

People, fisheries and improved services key to economic development in Marshall Islands, says World Bank Report

The World Bank

SYDNEY, December 21, 2021 – The Republic of Marshall Islands can achieve higher household incomes, increased employment and economic growth by focusing on the health and education of its people, improving the quality of government spending, and maximizing the benefits of key sectors like fisheries, according to new World Bank economic analysis.

The Marshall Islands' Country Economic Memorandum and Public Expenditure Review has examined the challenges, opportunities, and risks to sustainable growth and outlines reforms that can help deliver sustainable long-term economic development.

"Marshall Islands' National Strategic Plan provides a clear pathway for the country's development over the coming decade," said Degi Young, World Bank Resident Representative for the North Pacific. "This new report aligns with the aspirations of that plan and outlines the policy options that will help Marshall Islands achieve its goals."

The Country Economic Memorandum and Public Expenditure Review offers short, medium, and long-term recommendations based on five key policy areas:

- Strengthening labor opportunities by improving the quality of education and skills, linking training to labor market needs, and providing additional support to Marshallese people entering the workforce.
- Maximizing benefits from fisheries, including by supporting reforms that can increase the price of a fishing day under the regional Vessel Day Scheme, as well as reforming existing financial incentives in the domestic fisheries sector, and securing duty free access to the European Union market.
- Enhancing climate and

disaster resilience through stronger adaptation and disaster risk management planning, better early warning systems for multiple hazards, and improved collection and use of multi-hazard information to guide urban planning.

- Stabilizing government finances with measures including growth-friendly tax reform, improving revenue administration, and strengthening the budget process to better prioritize spending, limit borrowing and save surplus revenues for times when revenues fall short.
- Improving service delivery by improving the recruitment, selection, development and management of the public sector workforce, streamlining procurement, and increasing the efficiency and quality of spending to improve education and health outcomes.

"Marshall Islands' greatest resource is its people," said Degi Young. "Yet Marshallese face significant economic challenges: the impacts of climate change, distance to international markets, and now; the COVID-19 pandemic. This report shows that by investing in people and fiscal systems, and making the most of its fisheries resources, Marshall Islands can chart a course towards greater economic independence."

The World Bank works in partnership with 12 countries across the Pacific, supporting 84 additional projects totaling US\$2.08 billion in commitments in sectors including agriculture, aviation and transport, climate resilience and adaptation, economic policy, education and employment, energy, fisheries, health, macroeconomic management, rural development, telecommunications, and tourism.

Australia donates maritime border fundamental kits to FSM Customs

On 1 December, Australia donated maritime border fundamental kits to FSM Customs. The kits contain smart phones (loaded with small craft apps) and search kits (including items such as safety gloves, magnifying

glasses and torches). This donation will help FSM better protect its borders from illicit activities, such as the movement of weapons and drugs. The smart phones will allow FSM customs officers to view, report, analyse and share information on small craft movements.

The Australian Government will continue to provide support to FSM through ongoing training and mentoring on the use of this technology and kits. Rollout of the kits and smart phones was delivered through the Oceania Customs Organisation.



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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from SPREP, be vigilant and stay safe!

By Mr Kosi Latu,
SPREP Director General

The Festive Season is a wonderful time. So firstly, let me wish each and every one of you a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

In the tropical surroundings of the Pacific, Christmas celebration and preparations to welcome the New Year, are joyous occasions. It's a time for families, villages, churches and communities to give thanks, appreciate each other, reflect on the journey during the past 12 months and restock for 2022.

From our standpoint at SPREP, looking back at 2021, it has been a tough year. It is the second year where the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including border closures and stringent international travel restrictions, dictated the way we work and operate. It hampered our ability to travel and engage with our members and partners, as we would have done usually.

But we're not alone in this regard, and like many people across the world, we have had to adapt and find ways to navigate this new normal. As we look back at the year that was, I am pleased to say that despite the compounding circumstances, we have been tenacious and resilient in our efforts to fulfill our duty to serve all our member countries. Indeed, much has been achieved, just from a glimpse of the work your SPREP team has done in 2021.

On the global scale, COP26 in Glasgow presented another opportunity for our amplified Pacific voice to be heard. Did the Pacific achieve what it set out to do in Glasgow? Yes and no. What we saw was an outcome document filled with more pledges and promises without the necessary policies and actions needed to deliver on them. I have said this before and I will say it again; until we see real action to phase out coal and all kinds of fossil fuel, the future of the Pacific is bleak. But we can't stop, and we cannot be discouraged. We've got to keep fighting until we see some real concrete actions on these pledges and promises. That said, I am very proud of our amplified collective voice to remind the world that we need to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and we need a 1.5 Degrees Celsius world. The work of our Political Climate Change Champions, who advocated for our Pacific priorities, was excellent and we look forward to growing the momentum in Egypt next year.

The Third Clean Pacific Roundtable (3CPRT) in November was another successful step in the region's push for a cleaner future. The shift from a traditional society to a modern consumer-driven community has resulted in an unprecedented increase of wastes and pollution, as populations grow and developments expand rapidly. This has taken a toll on the health of communities, degrading natural ecosystems, threatening food security, impeding resilience to climate change and adversely impacting on social and economic development. This is extremely alarming and as custodians of our pristine Pacific oceans and land resources, are duty-bound to respond proactively to protect our environment. The adoption of the Cleaner Pacific 2025 Implementation Plan 2021-2025 and the Clean Pacific Roundtable 2021 Outcome Statement are key documents to guide our work and we look forward to working with everyone in the Pacific communities and our partners to keep the Pacific clean.

From our headquarters at Vailima in Samoa, the 30th Meeting of Officials of SPREP was hosted virtually guided by the theme "Accelerating Actions for a Resilient Blue Pacific." The meeting brought together the Secretariat's 21 Pacific Island and 5 Metropolitan Member countries and territories to discuss strategic, programme and governance issues pertaining to the organisation, as well as to approve the 2022-2023 work programme and budget. One of the many highlights was the Pacific Regional Declaration on the Prevention of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution and its Impacts, where Pacific Leaders expressed grave concern about the environmental, social, cultural, economic, human health and food security impacts of plastic pollution.

While SPREP's mandate is the Pacific environment, at the heart of everything we do is our Pacific people, our community. We were delighted to welcome more than 150 guests during our Open Day this year, celebrating the day when the SPREP Treaty was signed. It was a wonderful opportunity to give back to our community and invite them to learn more about the work we do. Showcasing our Pacific environment to students is always exciting as they represent the future we are fighting for. We hope this inspires them to become environment leaders in their families, schools and communities.

Speaking of inspiration, fourteen individuals and non-governmental organisations from seven countries across the Pacific,

who have shown a strong commitment to environmental conservation and sustainability, were awarded the prestigious Pacific Islands Environment Leadership Awards (PIELA). This is the second time the Awards were presented. In 2021 they commended our Pacific environment leaders in five different categories and were awarded to environmental leaders and activists from a range of countries across the Pacific region.

For Excellence in National Leadership in Environmental Sustainability and Conservation, Dr Patrick Pikacha from Solomon Islands, Mr Hubert Geraux from New Caledonia, and Ms Nunia Thomas-Moko from Fiji were the recipients of the Award. Three winners were also recipients of the Award for Excellence in Community Leadership in Sustainability and Conservation. They are Mr Timmy Sowang from Papua New Guinea, Mr Henry Kaniki from Solomon Islands, and NatureFiji-Mareqeti Viti, Fiji's first national conservation NGO.

The award for Excellence in Youth Leadership in Environmental Sustainability and Conservation was presented to the Erakor Bridge Community in Vanuatu, Mr Solomon Yeo from Solomon Islands, the Matautu Lefaga Youth Group from Samoa, and Caledoclean from New Caledonia. The Lifetime Achievement for Excellence in Pacific Environmental Leadership Award was presented to Dr Dick Walting from Fiji, Tusanilefaia'ao Iosefatu Reti from Samoa and Jean Kape from French Polynesia.

The Champion of the Pacific Environment Award was presented to the late Ms Sue Miller-Taei from New Zealand and Samoa. Ms Taei has worked to advance Pacific conservation throughout the region for over 30 years. She has served the Pacific through various roles in the conservation space, from Conservation International to WWF, SPREP and the Pew Foundation. Congratulations go out to our Pacific Islands Environment Leadership Award recipients.

We ended 2021 with awarding the Pacific Invasive Species "Battler of the Year" Award to the Wallis and Futuna Environment Service. The accolade, which until now has been won by an individual since its inception in 2017, recognises Pacific invasive species field-based practitioners who have worked at the grassroots level and achieved an outstanding outcome for biodiversity from the use of minimal resources. The Wallis and Futuna group embody that and more.



Despite the challenges of COVID-19, they successfully led rat removal operations on four islets; removed 30 large century plants and over 1,500 seedlings and removed over 1000m² of taro vine.

We are extremely proud of them. There was so much more work, and much more was achieved, that we cannot cover everything in this piece.

Our organisation has grown in size and stature. When I started 12 years ago, we had a staff of roughly over 60. Today, SPREP staff is 120, strong. Our presence in the region has also been enhanced, with offices now in Fiji, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. It has been an honour and privilege to serve the Pacific region, and all our global partners, as Director General for the past six years but I believe in a God of seasons, and it is time for someone else to continue the work. I congratulate the incoming Director General Mr Sefanaia Nawadra and I wish him all the best.

But it is Christmas. The time has come for us to put our tools of trade and implements down to celebrate and reflect on the reason for the season. The scriptures tell us that for unto us a child is born, for unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. As we spend quality time with our families and loved ones, let me take this opportunity to thank you all for 2021. Thank you for your work, support and prayers.

I am also mindful that we are in the Cyclone Season, where all of us in the Pacific and vulnerable. I urge you all to be prepared, stay vigilant and be safe. Merry Christmas and we look forward to continuing the work in the New Year when your team at SPREP is back on deck on Wednesday 5 January 2022.

Fa'afetai and God bless!

Suspected COVID-19 case in Pohnpei deemed false positive; the FSM remains COVID-19 free, though Pohnpei State sees 20-fold increase in influenza-like illnesses

FSM Information Services

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), upon further inspection of the person under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19, has determined that the PUI is unlikely to be a COVID-19 case. It is the view of the FSM National Government that the suspected COVID-19 case is a false positive, and that by extension the FSM remains COVID-19 free.

More than 20 close contacts of the PUI were tested for COVID-19, as well as 119 other individuals in the community, and 79 cases of influenza-like illness (ILI) that were presented to the Pohnpei State Hospital and local clinics. Without exception all tests were negative for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 disease.

However, there remains a rapid and

concerning spread of ILIs in the communities of Pohnpei State. There has been a 20-fold increase in ILI cases in healthcare facilities since December 6th, 2021. Human Coronavirus NL63 (HCoV-NL63), a common virus that causes the common cold, was determined as the culprit behind this outbreak. Of all the cases that have been seen so far at the Pohnpei State Hospital, 54% are female, 42% are under 5 years old, 25% are from Madolenihmw, 20% from Nett, and 19% from Kolonia respectively.

The symptoms of the common virus HCoV-NL63 may include fever, cough, stuffy nose, headache, sore throat, and/or body aches. The Government urges every member of the public to do their part in practicing hygienic measures, such as washing your hands regularly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; covering your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing; and wearing a mask if you

have respiratory symptoms. Stay at home if you feel sick, and seek medical care if your symptoms persist for more than 3 days or worsen. Avoid crowds, closed spaces, and unnecessary contact with those outside of your family. Good hygiene practices not only protect you and others against HCoV-NL63, but also from other respiratory viruses, including COVID-19.

The public is reminded that the COVID-19 Delta variant circulating globally is very dangerous and is causing a surge in hospitalizations and deaths in many countries. Omicron, a new variant of concern, has now been reported in at least 80 countries, and is spreading quickly; the latest information the FSM National Government has is that Omicron is responsible for 73% of new COVID-19 cases in the United States of America, whereas a week prior it was responsible for only 3%. There is much we still do not know about this new variant, but the whole of the FSM

must be prepared for the possibility that it could come to our shores. The Government has been, and will continue to be, expanding COVID-19 testing in all States, and we ask all FSM citizens and residents to take preventive measures to avoid transmission.

“My fellow Micronesians,” His Excellency David W. Panuelo said in a statement, “We can consider the increase of the common cold to be a kind of fire drill for COVID-19. We are still COVID-19 free, but we can plainly see that the common cold, which does not spread as fast as COVID-19, has reached much of our community. Let’s learn from this experience, and practice washing our hands, and staying home if we are sick—and wearing a mask in public if we have any symptoms—so that we can protect ourselves and our families.”

Our Lady of Mercy Church observes Misa de Gallo

Alvie B. Cabañez
Kaselehlie Press Volunteer Contributor

A Filipino Christmas tradition is motivating more than 50 people to walk out into the frigid pre-dawn air and intermittent weather to attend Misa de Gallo at Our Lady of Mercy (OLM) Church. It started from December 16-December 24 (9 mornings) at 05:30AM. This tradition was introduced by the Spanish friars to allow the farmers to hear mass before going to the fields early in the morning. The masses can start as early as 4 in the morning. Simbang Gabi is also known by its popular Spanish name, Misa de Gallo, or "Mass of the Rooster."

“In the Philippines, it starts at 4 a.m.,” said Engr. Mharzelexis A. Caga, who was tasked to be a gospel reader on the second day. “Unlike here, it’s not too early. And the church is just nearby,” he continued.

“When you wake up you should praise God,” said Marites E. Namoc, a choir member. “It’s such a good feeling that a few locals celebrated with us too,” she continued.

It is not just a tradition that is celebrated but also the spiritual preparation for Christmas and commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ. The celebration is also seen as a way of requesting blessings from the Lord, as most people believe that if one completes the whole series of nine dawn masses, their wishes will be granted.

Shortly after the mass, traditional delicacies await the churchgoers. There were a number of popular Filipino foods like: puto cheese, lugaw, suman, champorado, pansit-bihon, molo soup, pandesal, etc. These are usually served with coffee as well.

Each morning, well-meaning individuals and groups take turn in sponsoring the foods as a way of sharing their blessings for the past year.

Fr. Kenneth Urumolug, S.J., agreed to preside over the early morning masses. He was pleasantly surprised to see so many people in the church at that hour singing cheerful Christmas songs in the Filipino language of Tagalog.



First Minimum Wage Forum held in Pohnpei State

Pohnpei Enginkehlap News

December 17, 2021

Pohnpei—A minimum wage forum was held in the Governor's Conference room, Peilapalap, Kolonia on Friday, December 9, 2021. The forum was hosted by the newly formed Pohnpei State Economic Planning Commission and funded by SPC through a grant to Micronesia Care Foundation.

The forum, the first of its kind, drew members of the 10th Pohnpei State Legislature (PSL), Economic Planning Commission (EPC), Pohnpei Chamber of Commerce (PCC), Price Control Commission, and members of the public. Prior to the open panel discussion on the proposed legislation for an increase in the Pohnpei State minimum wage law, Governor Oliver welcomed everyone to the forum, including the former Governor of Pohnpei State, Marcelo Peterson. Governor Oliver spoke of the EPC's mandate to establish overall strategic direction and mobilization in Pohnpei State's planning and development efforts to restructure the government and the economy. He noted that the forum is part of this strategic direction and mobilization. Governor Oliver later introduced the members of the EPC: Mr. Mason Albert, Mr. Richie Adams, Acting Director of the Department of Resources and Development, Mr. Mark Kostka, Camille Movick-Inatio, Mr. Kelly Keller, Mr. Leon Panuelo, Jr., and the EPA's Secretariat under the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) Unit, Ms. Shirley-Ann Ligohr. Governor Oliver, by law, is the Chairman of the EPC.

Senator Stevenson Joseph, Chairman of the 10th PSL Finance Committee, gave remarks on proposed legislation for an increase in the minimum wage to \$2.50 per hour. He noted that increasing the minimum wage will have positive effects like enlarging the tax base and wage tax for the government. He also raised concerns that in doing so, operating expenses for businesses will increase which will, in turn, increase the prices of goods and services to cover increased labor costs.

Ms. Michaela Saimon, Chief of the Division of Commerce and Industries under the Department of Resources and Development gave a presentation on minimum wage policy and history. She referenced the Pohnpei Code and state law that requires a minimum wage review by the Chief of Personnel, Labor, and Manpower Development every three years or when deemed appropriate. In her presentation, she noted that the last increase to the present minimum wage was passed by the Pohnpei State Legislature in 2011 from \$1.35 to \$1.75 per hour. Quoting FSM Immigration statistics, she shared that over 8,000 people have left Pohnpei since 2019 to seek opportunities abroad. She also shared some pros and cons of a minimum wage increase, that included the following:

- Higher wages means increased living standards.
- Increased employee retention,



- reduce hiring and training costs.
- More money in the pockets of workers will flow to the businesses.
- Increased wages will increase the costs of goods and services for businesses, which will, in turn, be passed to the consumer.
- Businesses will be forced to cut jobs to maintain profitability.
- The current pandemic situation is not the best time to address this issue.

An open dialogue to discuss the issue was also provided with members of the business community, legislature, and members of the public sharing their views on the minimum wage. Mr. Richie Adams from the Pohnpei Chamber of Commerce spoke of the rising business costs due to shipping and availability of goods as a result of pandemic conditions. Speaking on behalf of the Price Control Commission, Ms. Marstella Jack, said the commission is also looking into the prices of goods and shipping costs, and their findings may contribute to future

discussions on raising the minimum wage. Mr. Tendy Liwy spoke on behalf of the youth. He asked for the support and assistance of the Government and the private businesses to raise wages and employee benefits to keep the youth from leaving Pohnpei for opportunities abroad. In Governor Oliver's closing remarks, he went over what was presented and discussed during the forum, briefly. He expressed his appreciation and gratitude for the cooperation and support of all parties involved to bring forth this public forum.

The forum was noted by many who attended as a good start to addressing this long-standing issue of raising the minimum wage. The forum was also broadcast live by V6AH.

The full video broadcast can be found online: <https://youtu.be/xecjKXhIjYA>

Further public discussion on this issue will be shared from the Governor's Office and EPC Secretariat.

IFJ, UNESCO launch kit to defend media freedom in the Pacific

International Federation of Journalists

December 23, 2021

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), has launched its 'Defend Media Freedom – Pacific Media Kit', which shares information and resources for the continued advocacy of press freedom across the Pacific.

The media kit comes at the culmination of the IFJ and UNESCO's project titled 'Building the Capacity of Media Associations to Assess Regulatory Environments and Strengthen

Professional Journalism in the Pacific', which began with national assessments of the media regulatory environment in early 2020 by journalist associations in Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The assessments were followed by locally led and driven pilot programs in the four countries from July to November 2020. The findings and resources developed as a result of these programs have been included in the new regional media kit, to enable stronger advocacy and solidarity across the Pacific.

The project was run by the IFJ in conjunction with its regional partners, including the Fijian Media Association,

Journalists Association of (Western) Samoa, Samoa Alliance of Media Practitioners for Development, Media Association blong Vanuatu and the Media Association of Solomon Islands. The kit includes shareable content, social media tiles, communication guidelines and branding guides and examples of possible campaigns.

The IFJ, and its regional partners and affiliates, are committed to media freedom and encourage media workers in the Pacific to support, promote and strengthen the Pacific environment for media freedom and encourage the development of ethical, community media.

The issue of whistleblowing is highlighted in the kit, following a campaign run by the Fijian Media Association, which states that the protection of whistleblowers from prosecution is essential to increase the possibility of uncovering and resolving corruption.

The IFJ said: "This media kit is an important resource to encourage the continued defence of media freedom in the Pacific. Sharing information, tools and content from across the project will enable stronger advocacy and journalist solidarity in the region. The IFJ thanks UNESCO for its support of journalists in the Pacific from 2020-2021."

SPC releases 2022 Tide Prediction Calendars

SPC

20 December 2021

Suva, Fiji – Tide Prediction Calendars for 24 Pacific locations were distributed last week to National Meteorological Services and ocean stakeholders around the region to assist in decision making on their daily ocean use.

The annual tide prediction calendars are a popular product of the Australian-funded Climate and Oceans Support Program in the Pacific (COSPPac) and are designed and produced in the region by the Pacific Community (SPC)'s Geoscience, Energy and Maritime (GEM) Division in partnership with Bureau of Meteorology, Australia.

From shipping companies and tourism operators to local fishing groups and disaster managers, tide calendars provide critical information for a range of users around the Pacific.

In Fiji, the tide calendars were used this year as part of a post disaster survey following Tropical Cyclone Yasa in January.

“The tide calendars were very useful in estimating the tide times during Cyclone Yasa’s land fall in Vanua Levu” said

Stephen Meke of the Fiji Meteorological Service who was part of the team with SPC conducting the post disaster survey in Vanua Levu.

He adds, “It also contains very useful information for villages who rely on the ocean for their livelihood especially the moon phases and tide heights. The tide calendar complements their traditional knowledge of the ocean and helps them determine when to go out to fish.”

In Tuvalu, the national meteorological service hosted their national climate outlook forum on Vaitupu in November. It was an opportunity to share the 2022 tide calendars for Vaitupu with the community. Community members spoke about how important the tide calendar is to their daily lives and decision making.

One response was, “Now we know the best time during lowest tide of the month to go out collect types of shells for their handicrafts, dig up small clams, night hunting mud crabs and picking turban shells on reef edges to feed our family”

According to the Director of the Tuvalu Meteorological Service, Tuala Katea, other responses included, “We are aware of the best time during new or full moon to cut the shoot of a coconut tree for collecting fresh toddy” and how it is “Very important to know the right tides vs wet season to plant taro for the annual taro competition”.

This year, a new location was added to the list of tide calendars with Ebeye in the Republic of Marshall Islands.

Calendar predictions are calculated by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology’s Tidal Unit with information from the Pacific Sea



Level and Geodetic Monitoring stations and a number of additional tide gauges around the region.

2022 Tide Prediction Calendars are available for the following locations: Rarotonga, Cook Islands; Pohnpei Harbor, Federated States of Micronesia; Lautoka, Fiji; Suva, Fiji; Betio, Kiribati; Kanton, Kiribati; Kiritimati, Kiribati; Majuro, Marshall Islands; Ebeye, Marshall Islands; Aiwo, Nauru; Alofi, Niue; Malakal, Palau; Lombrum, Papua New Guinea; Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; Apia, Samoa; Honiara Solomon Islands; Lata, Solomon Islands; Tarekukure, Solomon Islands; Nuku’alofa, Tonga; Neiafu, Tonga; Funafuti, Tuvalu; Vaitupu, Tuvalu; Port Vila, Vanuatu; Luganville, Vanuatu.

Predictions can also be downloaded from the Pacific Ocean Portal or the Australian Bureau of Meteorology website.

Micronesian Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) is seeking applications for the position of Deputy Director in our central office on Saipan.

Qualifications:

- Be an attorney admitted to practice before at least one of the courts of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Guam, or the Northern Mariana Islands, or eligible to be admitted.
- Have sufficient management experience to assist the executive director in the day-to-day management of the organization.

Compensation and Benefits:

Compensation includes an annual salary dependent upon experience, ranging from \$72,000 to \$81,000, based on a competitive pay scale, and generous benefits will be provided. Salaries of all staff may be adjusted by the Board of Directors depending on available funding.

Relocation expenses:

MLSC pays airfare to relocate to Saipan for the employee and their immediate family, and a fixed amount for transportation of household goods.

To apply:

Please submit a resume and cover letter to Executive Director Lee Pliscou at lee@mlscnet.org.

Position is open until filled.

Former PICRC researcher Lincoln Rehm awarded prestigious KNAUSS Fellowship

Palau International Coral Reef Center

Earlier this year, former PICRC Researcher Lincoln Rehm was selected as a finalist for the John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship. Sixty-eight fellows were selected across the United States to work with either the Legislative or Executive Branch of the U.S. within a marine policy capacity.

The goal of this fellowship is to provide graduate students the opportunity to network and gain professional experience in offices that focus on marine policy issues. Fellows can choose to work with either branch, and Lincoln Rehm selected to work with the Executive Branch, interviewing with 18 different offices such as NOAA, Department of Treasury, Department of Energy, and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

After the interview process, Lincoln matched with NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service as a Data Governance and Policy Fellow. His job will be

to work alongside multiple offices to ensure data is equitable and accessible to decision-makers at all levels. Many previous fellows have gone on to continue working in high level positions within the US government, run for state office, or even continue research as a post-doc!

The one-year fellowship begins on February 1, 2022 right around the date of his PhD defense. Lincoln Rehm hopes to use his experiences at PICRC and through his graduate studies to positively impact how fisheries data is used across NOAA and throughout the government.



STATE OF WISCONSIN
:CIRCUIT COURT
:EAU CLAIRE COUNTY

IN THE INTEREST OF:

Perry H. Eldridge

Notice and Order of Hearing (For Publication) Case No. 21TP29

TO: David Arnold
Physical Description of alleged parent:
Birth year: 1985 Age: 36 Height: 5'8" Weight: 150 Race: Asian or Pacific Islander Ethnicity: Filipino Hair Color: Black Eye Color: Brown

Additional identifying information:
Date of conception: 12/2007-01/2008
Place of conception: Park Falls, WI or Cincinnati, OH
Date of birth: 08/28/2008
Place of birth: Cincinnati, OH

IT IS ORDERED:

This Notice be published advising you that a Petition for Termination of your parental rights to the named-above child be heard at the Eau Claire County Courthouse, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Eau Claire Circuit Court Branch 4, 721 Oxford Avenue, Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54703-5496, on February 02, 2022 at 3:30 pm.

IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR, the court may hear testimony in support of the allegations in the Petition and grant the request of the petitioner to terminate your parental rights.

You have the right to have an attorney present. If you desire to contest the matter and cannot afford an attorney, the state public defender may appoint an attorney to represent you.

If you fail to appear and the court terminates your parental rights, a notice of intent to pursue relief from the judgment must be signed and filed in the trial court within 30 days after the judgment is entered, in order to preserve the right to pursue such relief.

BY THE COURT:

/s/ Honorable Jon Theisen, Eau Claire County Circuit Court Judge
12/27/2021

Attorney Erika Amundson
1241 Menomonie Street, Suite G
Eau Claire, WI 54703
715-514-4395
SBN: 1065624

Governor Oliver swears in Police Commission

Pohnpei Enginkehlap News

December 17, 2021

Pohnpei—Governor Oliver swore in members of the Police Commission at the Governor's Conference room, Peilapalap, Kolonia on December 16, 2021. Four new members of the Commission were nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the 10th Pohnpei State Legislature:

Wensper Raymond
Baron Mendiola
Joab Paul
Patrick Pedrus

In his remarks, Governor Oliver expressed gratitude to Speaker Edwin and the 10th Pohnpei State Legislature for their cooperation and support to confirm the commission members. He also thanked the Director of the Department of Public Safety, Mr. Patrick Carl, and the Attorney General's office for their support. Governor Oliver noted that the Police Commission's duties and responsibilities are unique because they are dealing with law enforcement. He urged the committee members to work with the Department of Public Safety, Legislative Counsel, and AG's office to review and affirm their duties and responsibilities as prescribed by Pohnpei State law. He thanked the



spouses and family members of the committee members for their valuable support.

Speaker Edwin and the Vice Chairman of the Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee, Senator Dahker Abraham, congratulated and issued the commission members their certificates of appointment. Speaker Edwin also spoke of the unique duties and responsibilities of the commission, acknowledging the need for oversight of law enforcement officers to maintain their bearing and professionalism. Mr. Wensper Raymond, spoke on behalf of the committee members to thank Governor Oliver, Speaker Edwin, 10th Pohnpei State Legislature, and Director Carl for the opportunity to serve on the commission.

Deacon William Ioanis, who is also a Police Captain, gave the opening prayer. Public Affairs Officer, Mr. Peterkio Hairens, was the master of ceremonies.

According to 16 PC 1-119, it shall be the responsibility of the commission to: Oversee the activities of the Division of Police and Security and make periodic reports to the Governor and the Legislature as to the operations of the Division and its effectiveness in enforcing the laws of the state; (2) Receive and investigate complaints from the general public on any matter relative to the jurisdiction and activities of the Division; and (3) Advise the Director and the Chief as to corrective action where necessary.

3rd Special Session adjourns with Acts & Resolutions for 2021

FSM Congress Information

December 18, 2021

FSM--PALIKIR, POHNPEI. The 22nd Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia adjourned its 3rd Special Session on December 18, 2021, with the following Congressional Acts and Resolutions.

CA 22-66 & CA 22-67 are congressional acts to change the use or allottee of funds previously appropriated therein, to fund public projects and social programs for both the states of Pohnpei and Kosrae, and for other purposes. In the same manner and specific to both the states of Yap and Chuuk is CA 22-68; for individual states we have CA 22-70 for the state of Kosrae, CA 22-69 for the state of Chuuk, and CA 22-65 for the state of Pohnpei.

The 22nd Congress joins the leadership and citizens of the Nation in mourning of the passing of Mrs. Christina "Kiki" Poll Stinnet through condolence resolution CR 22-85. Mrs. Stinnet was a staunch advocate for the empowerment and equality of women, and

a dedicated businesswoman, community organizer, and a member of various community boards and civic organizations in Chuuk and throughout the FSM.

On a lighter note, the Congress confirms the nomination of Mr. Nena C. Ned through CR 22-85. The Congress has considered Mr. Nena's nomination and acknowledges his professional experience and qualifications making him a suitable candidate to serve as a member of the FSM Social Security Board of Directors.

The FSM is anticipating two donated patrol boats from the Government of Australia and in honor of the late Mr. Bethwel Henry, the first Speaker of the FSM Congress, the Congress is requesting the President through CR 22-84 to rechristen one of the donated marine vessels after the former speaker.

The United States Department of Education is to fund and support the Federated States of Micronesia in its project entitled: "CURRENT"—a commitment to retaining teachers. CR 22-79 is approving and

accepting the grant in the amount of \$250,000 to assist the FSM in its project for its first year spanning from October 2021 to September 2022. The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia wishes to express its sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the United States of America for this generous grant.

The Asian Development Bank issued a Grant Award on November 15, 2021 to the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia in the amount of \$5,000,000 for the purpose of providing support to the FSM Sustainable Road infrastructure Investment Project. The Congress through CR 22-82 approves the award and wishes to express its appreciation and gratitude to the ADB for extending this grant.

The 3rd Special Session adjourned sine-die on December 18, 2021. Unless a special session is earlier called by the Speaker, the next Regular Session of the Congress is scheduled for January 10, 2022.