

Communicating in Bangkok

A Marshall Islands telecommunications delegation was in Bangkok, Thailand last month to participate in the ninth Asia Pacific Telecommunication and ICT Development Forum (ADF) held from August 22–24, 2012.

Secretary Phil Philippo and Spectrum Manager Rommel Natividad represented RMI and delivered two presentations, chaired one session, and served as one of the panelists during the closing session of the ADF.

The delegation reported the outcome of the Mejit Information Communications Technology (ICT) tele-center project entitled “Livelihood Opportunities and Cultural Preservation through a Sustainable and Eco-friendly ICT tele-center” in front of one hundred people. RMI is also vying for two more opportunities to get similar ICT projects funded by the Japan government.

Mejit is enjoying one-year satellite subscription from the National Telecommunications Authority, purchased six mobile phones, and a generous amount of cell cards and telcards provided for by the Japan government through the Asia Pacific Telecommunity Extra-Budgetary Contribution Japan project. One thing notable about the Mejit ICT telecenter is that it addressed e-government, e-health, e-learning, gender equality, and needs of persons-with-disabilities, which are a few to mention on the advantages of internet connectivity, according to Philippo and Natividad.

During the meetings, the RMI delegation presented a plaque of appreciation to RMI ICT funders,



Junichi Osawa of KDDI Foundation, Japan, with T&C's Phil Philippo and Rommel Natividad, the ICT Project Proponent and Spectrum Manager, RMI.

KDDI Foundation and Japanese experts Yasuhiko Kawasumi, Yuki Umezawa, Junichi Osawa, Naoki Fuke, Yosuke Uchiyama, and Yukio Miyoshi who participated and contributed to the advancement of RMI ICT field for 2009 and 2010. The plaque was signed by the Senator of Mejit Finance Minister Dennis Momotaro, Minister of Transportation and Communications Minister Rien Morris, Mayor of Mejit Island Charles Abraham, Chief Secretary Casten Nemra, Secretary Philippo of Transportation and Communications. The plaque commemorates the strong ties between RMI and Japan governments and the technical assistance that Japan ICT experts extended to the RMI.



Jaki-ed sale coming soon!

The weavers' house in the University of the South Pacific's 'secret garden' is bursting with energy as the master weavers and their advanced apprentices put the finishing touches to their mats to be displayed and sold in the sixth annual Jaki-ed auction.

The annual event, which coincides with Culture Day, will be held at the Marshall Islands Resort's Melele Room on Friday night, September 27. USP Director Dr. Irene Taafaki said she is thrilled with the quality of this year's mats and is looking forward to a big turnout at the auction.

'Advanced apprentice' Arokllynn Anitok works on a mat for the auction with Susan Jieta and Betty Lobwij in the background at the USP weavers' house.

Lots of support for culture week

ISAAC MARTY

If you were wondering if there's going to be any 'Manit Day' a.k.a. 'culture week', well be of good cheer because it's happening September 24-29 and according to Alele Director Newton Lajuan, "it's going to be a learning and enjoyable one."

Alele, which houses the national museum and archives, was closed in February due to lack of funding. Now the RMI government is looking to increase Alele's budget to support its functions. The US Embassy and other donors have also given grant support to Alele. "I'm grateful for all the help and support given to Alele. Alele was in ICU (intense care unit), now it's in the rehab department recovering from a stroke," said Lajuan. "Culture week preparations are underway."

Culture week committee includ-



Alele's Newton Lajuan

to do with the Marshallese culture during the week. Traditional fire starting, coconut husking races, coconut bag races, and battle of bands on local music with ukuleles, guitars, or tins and buckets, are among other activities to be in the week. Waan Aelon in Majel Director Alson Kelen confirmed that canoe races will take place on the Friday and Saturday of the week. "There will be a 'korkor' (one-man canoe) and 'tipnol' (two-man canoe) race," said Kelen.

Lajuan mentioned that a meeting last week with the culture week committee resulted in plans to have an essay contest for elementary, high school, and college students. The topic: Why is history important to the Marshall Islands?

For booths aiming to stand in

the event, Lajuan strongly encouraged local food be included to promote the culture. He also confirmed that the Jined Kiped jaki-ed weavers from USP and Bob Festival will take part in the culture celebration. "If space here (at Alele) is little, we'll try and see if the former weather station area would be good," said Lajuan. "We're also trying to have guest speakers to talk about issues related to the Marshall Islands and their experiences while growing up here each night of the week. Education Minister Dr. Hilda Heine will be talking about the new published history book 'Etto nan Raan Kein'."

Announcements for culture week will be aired, said Lajuan.

When asked about the museum, Lajuan said that it would still be closed due to problems with water leaking from the roof. All

the artifacts were moved to other locations for safety. "The government will provide a sloping roof to prevent roof leaks. The money support is different from the Alele budget," said Lajuan. "We also have businesses that made donations for a paint job on Alele. We'll be having volunteers scraping and painting the walls next week."

Alele budget for 2013 to 2014 is expected to increase from \$64,000 to \$214,000. Budgeting documents are soon to be complete for submission to Cabinet, said Lajuan. "Changes, improvements, repair, and revival of departments to generate income for Alele will take place," said Lajuan. "We will digitize or convert our VHS documented tapes to DVDs for better preservation. And also to document more stories and skills, from our elders before they pass away."