

Nauru: 'We're brothers'

GIFF JOHNSON

A top Nauru official told the Journal this week that they hope to work with landowners to clear off debt on their leases, and to move forward with fixing the situation at the former Eastern Gateway Hotel.

In the meantime, however, because they are facing several lawsuits associated with claims that Nauru has defaulted on its lease agreements for the Jable and the Gateway properties, David Aingimea said they will fight the cases in court — while still being optimistic that the issues can be resolved amicably.

Aingimea, executive director of the EIGIGU Holdings Corporation, said Nauru is “a bit disappointed with the way things turned out” regarding these two properties. He was referring to the lawsuits filed last year.

“When things were not good in the Marshall Islands, we considered ourselves good friends of the Marshalls,” Aingimea said Tuesday. During the time that “Nauru crashed, we needed friends, not enemies,” he said. “The people whom we supported through many years and gave more than the normal rental payments we expected to stand by us during our hard times instead of cutting our feet from under us.”

He commented that Nauruans see themselves as “blood brothers” of Marshall Islanders. “There is no other country in the Pacific with which we are so closely related,” Aingimea added.

Despite going through a financial crash in the mid-2000s, Nauru maintained payments to landowners here — payments that Aingimea said were double the government rate. Although Majuro landowners say Nauru owes many years back rents, Aigimea

Aingimea hopes for positive fix for Gateway

claims it is only two years that Nauru was unable to pay, and now wants to clear this and move forward. He said his company is prepared to clear off all legitimate lease debt and move forward.

“We’ve been good to the landowners,” he said. “We accept that during our own crisis we couldn’t maintain payments.”

Aingimea was in town this week with former Nauru President, now Minister Marcus Stephen to meet with landowners and others on Nauru lease issues. “We are here to meet our obligations,” he said. “The minister and the board have resolved to do whatever takes to clean up the Eastern Gateway Hotel.

“Now that Nauru is in a healthy position, we can face this problem,” he said. “We look at it (Eastern Gateway) with the great prospect of fixing it up and making it better.”

He indicated that Nauru wants to focus on the Delap property since it does not have confidence any longer in working with Jable landowners as a result of the scavenging and demolition of Nauru’s former apartment buildings this past year.

“Our intentions are honorable,” Aingimea said.



Kwajalein Senator/Iroij Mike Kabua joined the opening ceremony for a USP-supported jaki-ed training program on Ebeye Friday. Kabua is holding an in-progress jaki-ed being made by expert weaver Susan Jieta. Photo: Tamara Greenstone Alefaio.

Coach group to be formed

Coach Tom Newell, a former NBA coach and international ambassador of the State Department’s Sports Diplomacy program, announced on January 8 the formation of the Marshall Islands Basketball Coaches Association (MIBCA). The Coaches Association caps the successful completion of an intensive coaches clinic held in Majuro from January 3–8. Coaches who completed the training were certified as Level II coaches by the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), the first such certification in Micronesia.

The officers of MIBCA were elected by the coaches. Dr. James Yaingeluo will serve as President, Helmar ‘Marmar’ Lejjena as Vice President, and Near Kabua as the treasurer and press liaison. Giff Johnson was also named as an Emeritus member. The MIBCA will work to better professionalize coach training and development in the RMI. In addition, the organization will focus on community engagement and service.

Coach Newell has traveled to over 40 countries following his NBA career, teaching basketball fundamentals and encouraging kids to apply the skills of discipline and hard work to the rest of their lives. He travels to Ebeye on January 10 for additional training for coaches and outreach to the community.

Basketball clinics: Pages 14, 15

Komol tata to Taiwan for aid

The Republic of China (Taiwan) Ambassador George TK Li presented a check for \$900,000 to Finance Minsiter Dennis Momotaro Wednesday.

This is budgetary support and is a part of the ROC (Taiwan) Annual Grant to the RMI Government for the quarter of January-March 2013. The People and Government of the ROC (Taiwan) along with the ROC

Embassy in Majuro sincerely wish that the above-mentioned grant of budgetary support will contribute to the operations of the RMI Government and to the welfare of Marshallese people, said Ambassador Li.

Ambassador Li emphasized that the core values of ROC’s foreign aid efforts are “partnerships for progress” and “sustainable development.”

Jefferson Keju beaten and run over

Marshall Islander Jefferson Keju died on Saipan last week, the result of beating by two Saipan men and being hit by two vehicles.

According to reports in both the Marianas Variety and the Saipan Tribune, Jefferson got into an argument with the cashier at a takeout store in the Garapan area of Saipan when the cashier refused to sell him beer. Herman Selepeo Fitial, 34, and his nephew Felix Kileleman Jr., 19, who have been arrested and charged with manslaughter and other assault charges, claim that Keju was drunk and threatened them with rocks as he left the store around 11pm. They

then proceeded to beat him on the road and were hitting and kicking him while Keju was on the road.

As a speeding van appeared, Fitial and Keleleman tried to get out of the way, leaving Keju on the road. Kileleman was hit and sustained injuries, while the van ran over Keju and reportedly dragged him 50 feet before driving off.

Fitial and Kileleman fled the scene. A second vehicle hit Keju who was lying in the road but reportedly still alive. The second vehicle stopped to render assistance and Keju was rushed to the hospital, but pronounced dead on arrival.

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Founder Frank Lyon mapping the Trust Territories in 1975

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