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Candi: 'We all had a **P27** role to play'

The Marshall Islands

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Ladies weave new lives



President Chris Loeak on Friday congratulated Mona Tatak of Mili, one of seven young women to complete a six-month USP-sponsored jaki-ed weaving program. "They are revitalizing the culture but just as important they can also make a living from it," he said. Story and photo, page 7. Photo: Karen Earnshaw.

Dramatic rescue

RMI a leader in press freedom

Palau and the Marshall Islands are the most media-friendly nations out of 40 in the Asia/Pacific region, and Marshall Islands President Chris Loeak is delighted with the news.

"I absolutely support freedom of the press," said President Loeak commenting on the high global ranking of the Marshall Islands in a media freedom report issued last week.

He said he was disappointed, however, that the Marshall Islands did not take the number one spot in the Asia/Pacific region — the RMI is second, behind Palau,

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KAREN EARNSHAW

"It was a blessing, really, that we were running a bit late. Anja (Andy) had been up until nearly midnight preparing the boat, so we didn't leave our base until about 6:30am," MEC Britts Too crew member Ian Pickering said Wednesday.

Marshalls Billfish Club Tournament Director Rudy Aliven said the record showed that the MEC boat was the last one out and left the Marshall Islands Resort dock at 6:50am.

"We were heading through the bridge when we saw about six people on the top of the bridge waving us down," Pickering said. "At first we thought that another boat was going through, so we stopped. Then I noticed

MEC Britts Too saves three from the sea

George Lanwi (the Police Commissioner) up there and I shouted 'What's going on?'

"He said that some kids had drifted out and asked if we could rescue them. We started heading out slowly, but the guys on the bridge indicated the people were further out, straight out.

"It wasn't that rough, hardly any swell at all.

"We went south about another 100 yards and we spotted two heads off our

starboard side. It turned out to be two females and they were apart by about five to 10 yards." On approaching the ladies, the crew threw two lifejackets to them. "As we got closer, I threw a rope to one of the girls," Pickering said. "One of them was really distressed. She was screaming and her friend was telling her to grab the life jacket and rope.

"We backed the boat down to them,

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Take a bow, ladies!

The seven successful apprentices in the USP-organized weaving program: Mona Tatak, Nekiej Betwel, Betty Lobwij, Moje Kelen, Aroklynn Anitok, Ruthina Jai, and Bonitha Jesse. Inset: First Lady Lieom Anono Loeak with master weaver Susan Jieta. Photos: Karen Earnshaw and Isaac Marty.

Seven new 'dream weavers'

A ceremony at Marshall Islands Resort's Melele Room showed that a group of young Marshallese women are successfully perpetuating a cultural skill that was in danger of dying out just a few years ago.

University of the South Pacific on Friday recognized seven women for completing a six-month jaki-ed (fine mat) weaving course at the USP Campus. Thirteen jaki-ed created by the trainees and master weavers were snapped up by the audience that packed the Melele Room. The event was broadcast live on V7AB.

First Lady Lieom Anono Loeak called the training program "a milestone" that will encourage other young women "to take up conventional ways of earning a living while contributing to the preservation of our culture and promoting our Marshallese heritage."

The First Lady emphasized how few Marshallese today know how to make jaki-ed. "You are now ranked with very few others who can say they know how to weave a jaki-ed," she said. Loeak also recognized Women United Together Marshall Islands because at the organization's 2006 annual conference, many women saw the USP presentation about jaki-ed displayed at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu and this led to revitalization of a nearly lost Marshallese art.

Friday's program saw a 20-minute visual record about RMI's "Dream Weavers," starting with Joachim deBrum photos of Marshallese women wearing jaki-ed around 1900 and documenting USP's jaki-ed weaving program.

Kimber Rilometo emceed the ceremony, which also included comments from weaver training coordinator Tamara Greenstone and USP Director Dr. Irene Ta'afaki.

The First Lady handed certificates of completion to the jaki-ed apprentices Mona Tatak, Betty Lobwij, Aroklynn Anitok, Ruthina Jai, Nekiej Betwel, Moje Kelen and Bonitha Jesse. The master weavers who taught the apprentices are Susan Jieta, Ashken Binat and Patsy Hermon.

Although the training officially finished last week, on Monday this week, the weavers were back at USP earlier this week working on new mats that will be auctioned during the annual jaki-ed auction in late September.

President Chris Loeak, in comments to the Journal, praised the revival of jaki-ed skills. "They are revitalizing the cultural but just as important they can also make a living from it," he said. "It may inspire people to go into other areas of our culture, to make a living and be proud of being Marshallese."

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