

COM: Looks Like Busy Session

By Frank Rosario
Micronesian News Service

SAIPAN—The second regular session of the fifth Congress of Micronesia convenes on Saipan on Monday. The session will run for 50 consecutive days, concluding March 4 at or before 12 midnight.

The opening day, largely ceremonial, will have few legislative activities. But both President of the Senate Tosiwo Nakayama and House Speaker Bethwel Henry are expected to make opening remarks, outlining where the congress should focus its attention during this session.

This will be the second time the congress has met on Saipan since a fire in February 1971 destroyed the meeting chambers and cut short the first regular session of the fourth congress. That fire sent the congress to the other districts, beginning a process of holding sessions away from Saipan that saw special sessions held in Truk and Ponape and a regular session in Palau before the lawmakers returned to Saipan last year for the start of the fifth congress.

One date that is tentatively set for the coming session is the annual State of the Territory address by High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston. That will be Friday, at 10 a.m. before a joint session of the house and

senate. The public is invited to attend this and any session of the congress and any of the many committee hearings that are open to the public as well during the course of the session.

Observers from both the congress and the executive branch forecast that the coming session will be the most productive ever. Tosiwo Nakayama of Truk said on Saipan this week that at this session more than 500 pieces of legislation will be introduced or reconsidered. Special Assistant for Legislative Affairs N. Neiman Craley Jr. said that at this point, the congress still has 338 pieces of legislation pending since the first session. So if the congress is going to end up with 500 bills and resolutions, as Nakayama predicts, they will have their work cut out for them. "That's a very interesting figure," Craley said. "It is going to give them a tremendous workload, particularly since legislation left over at the end of this session will die in December unless considered in a special session during summer or fall." Senate Vice-President Lazarus Saliu of Palau who is also chairman of the congress' Joint Committee on Future Status, said that one of the key subjects to be discussed during the session is the constitutional convention bill. The bulk of the expense has already been

provided for by the U.S. Congress, which passed a supplemental budget request which includes \$450,000 to be used during the convention. The Palau senator emphasized that the constitutional convention bill must be passed this year because the funds allocated by the U.S. must be obligated before the current fiscal year runs out on July 1. In view of that, Saliu said, "there may be created a smaller group authorized by the congress to handle that money and to see that it is obligated." He indicated that the convention might be held this summer, probably in May or June in Palau District. "The problem now is, if it is held in May or June, do we have enough time to elect the delegates... maybe the delegates need not be elected. Maybe the district legislatures will select members to attend."

In the last session of the congress, the constitutional convention bill passed the senate, but the House took no action on it, much to the disappointment of Saliu who fought hard for its passage. Extensive hearings on the bill from all districts invited to get their thinking on the matter. The Marianas delegation asked to be excluded from the convention because they contend that they are opting for a different political status, closer to the United States.

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elaborate on the recommendations that are in the report until such time as the congress members received the report of the joint committee.

Craley feels the status issue could become a major item in this session "particularly in view of what appears to be the marked contrast between the Marianas negotiations, that seem to be moving ahead fairly rapidly, and the rest of the Micronesian negotiations that seem to be kind of lagging a little bit behind."

Regarding the U.S. policy on the return of public lands in Micronesia, the special assistant for legislative affairs considers this to be a source for "major legislation this session." The senate vice-president agreed, saying, "this will be a key piece of legislation. Congress will have to consider and implement the recently announced policy with respect to the return of the so-called public lands in Micronesia to the rightful owners. That policy was formed in such a way that it is necessary for the congress to pass enabling legislation before the district legislatures can act."

Price control legislation is sure to reappear, according to Nakayama. "It has been in the congress in every single session since Palau," the Truk senator noted. He added that rising food costs, especially on staple food items, necessitated such legislation. He cited a recent increase in fuel cost as one of the "pressing reasons" to work on the price control legislation. A price control bill passed the senate in the Palau session but

whatever we can produce to cut down on imports of some of the things we can grow and produce in our own districts."

Saliu said he doesn't have any specific suggestion at this point in time," though he considers economic development to be an important issue.

The congress also might want to look at the fuel situation and what can be done about it. Nakayama pointed out that the fuel crisis is under study by the congress legal counsel as to whether the congress should take any action. "Since Micronesia is not part of the United States, we shouldn't be made to suffer under the Arab oil embargo," Nakayama said. He added that the 12 per cent cutback is only voluntary on the part of Mobil, which gets its oil from the Philippines, exempted under the oil embargo. This is necessary, according to the senate president, so that should worst come to worst, Micronesia wouldn't be completely out of fuel.

"I also think they might want to consider something on this fuel and power shortage, and I think that will depend a great deal on how serious the situation is," added Craley.

Craley went on to point out that another thing the congress will act on is the single-pay plan that went into effect last September. "The congress has to take action on the pay schedule because the present pay scale expires on June 30," Craley said. He continued: "The congress has to decide either that it is good and working and

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senate, but the House took no action on it, much to the disappointment of Saliu who fought hard for its passage. Extensive hearings on the bill were held with representatives from all districts invited to get their thinking on the matter. The Marianas delegation asked to be excluded from the convention because they contend that they are opting for a different political status, closer to the United States.

Status issues, the return of public lands to Micronesia, economic development, price control legislation and a pay scale are some of the major issues which the congress will face this session.

Saliu pointed out that on the status issue, there will be some recommendations for consideration by the congress as a result of the hearings conducted by the joint committee on future status in all six districts of Micronesia. However, the status committee chairman added that "since the last round did not result in any real agreement...the status issue will not be discussed at length this session." He declined to

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On the matter of economic development, the senate leadership again agreed that there will be some sort of legislation to improve economic development in Micronesia, most notably in the areas of agriculture and marine resources.

Nakayama said: "We will urge Micronesians to produce

fuel.

"I also think they might want to consider something on this fuel and power shortage, and I think that will depend a great deal on how serious the situation is," added Craley.

Craley went on to point out that another thing the congress will act on is the single-pay plan that went into effect last September. "The congress has to take action on the pay schedule because the present pay scale expires on June 30," Craley said. He continued: "The congress has to decide either that it is good and working and to continue it, or decide that there are certain deficiencies in it and work up another one. If there isn't any action, in theory that system ends on June 30 and then in the absence of anything, the executive branch would make a decision whether to continue it or institute something else. But the law requires us to do that."

An issue that is sure to get considerable attention during the session is reapportionment of the House. Craley, Saliu and Nakayama all feel that the

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Burned-out Family Homesite Robbed

News Saipan Bureau

SAIPAN - Trying to recover from an August fire that leveled their new house and everything in, the family of Saipan Airport Manager Leon T. Camacho this week was reeling from a second attack: an

but those materials."

Pleading for their return or information about the theft, Camacho said he would keep all information confidential. Police are still investigating the case, he added.

The missing supplies include about 35 2 x 2s, 20 2 x 4 x 16s plywood and three or four cases of nails.

The house is 75 per cent complete, Camacho said, because about 10 Korean construction workers employed by American International Constructors at Isley Field volunteered to help him build it.

Air Micronesia also allowed him free freight to bring his supplies over from Pacific Construction Co. on Guam, said Camacho.

"I had this house blessed when we got the supports up, but now I've had more bad luck before we finished," he said.

as-yet-undiscovered thief who made off with \$500 worth of lumber and nails brought to finish their second new house in a year.

The thief also took "some pigs, whiskey and three cases of beer I had for the workmen," said Camacho. "But I don't need anything

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possibility exists that complete data from the recent census may not be available during the session.

Workmen's compensation has come up as a potential item of interest again, pending from the first session, and "that's one to keep watching," according to Craley. Others are: Transpac problems; the return of the people of Eniwetok in the Marshal Islands; the progress of political education in Micronesia and a law of the sea committee report on the world-wide conference that was held in

Geneva last year and the one to be held this year in Caracas, Venezuela.

In the last session of the congress, there were 390 bills introduced; 62 were enacted, 52 approved and 10 disapproved. Some 148 joint resolutions were introduced and 40 were adopted single resolutions were introduced and nine were adopted.

The congress will undoubtedly reconsider this session some of the measures that were disapproved, among them, admiralty bill, greatly desired by some congressmen.

Drive Carefully

The Life You Snuff May Be Your Own

New Peacesat Member Airs

SAIPAN (MNS) - The Peacesat network of satellite communications gained another member Thursday when a new ground station was tested successfully in Noumea, New Caledonia.

The Noumea station joins those in Hawaii, Fiji, American Samoa, Tonga, New Zealand, Papua-New Guinea and the Trust Territory in the Peacesat (Pan Pacific Experiments in Communications and Education by Satellite) project.

Conducting the initial tests from Noumea was professor Katashi Nose of the University of Hawaii physics department, the same electronics expert who installed the Trust Territory station on Saipan. All stations on the satellite network today reported the Noumea signal was an excellent one.

Programming on Peacesat was suspended temporarily over the holidays because several of the stations - Hawaii, Fiji, Papua-New Guinea and New Zealand - are operated in connection with universities which are between semesters at present.

Programming will resume on Jan. 22 according to George Callison, Saipan terminal manager.

The first program, at 12:30 p.m. that day, will involve Saipan, Suva, Fiji and Lae, Papua-New Guinea in a discussion of education for self-government. Although Fiji gained it's independence in 1970, Papua-New Guinea achieved self-government on Dec. 1, 1973. Local officials charged with developing Micronesia's education for self-government program expect to gain valuable information through this satellite exchange.

Callison is also involved in planning the new education for self-government program as a special assistant to director of public affairs Strik Yoma.

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