



LOCAL NEWS

Ambassador Ming vows to deliver games facilities on time

CHINA'S Ambassador to Solomon Islands, Mr Li Ming has vowed that his Government will deliver major sporting facilities to the people of Solomon Islands in time ahead of the 2023 Pacific Games, regardless of setbacks generated by covid-19 to the original timeline.

On his way from Beijing to take up his posting earlier this month, Ambassador Ming brought with him less than 20 engineers who have wasted no time starting design discussions on major infrastructures after fulfilling their quarantine requirements.

"We will stick to the timeline as scheduled and we deliver the facilities on time," Mr Ming told Prime Minister Sogavare during a courtesy visit on Friday last week.

China is committed to build a brand new 10,000 seats stadium, a new Olympic-size swimming pool, five tennis courts, a new training track and field, a hockey field, a multipurpose hall and a 1,200 square-metre office block.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sogavare said despite the current economic slowdown posed by the impacts of covid-19, the government is committed to meet its

share of the funding for the Pacific Games 2023, to ensure the Games takes place.

"We fought hard to be given the honour to host the Games. We will not let go of the Games," he said.

The Government has opened a new Office Complex in Honiara in late July this year to house local administrators overseeing preparations for the Games.

The Pacific Games is a multi-sport event, much like the Olympic Games but on a smaller scale, with participation exclusively from countries around the Pacific Ocean. Held every four years, the Games began

in 1963.

Nine different cities in six countries and territories have hosted the Pacific Games so far. Four countries have hosted the games three times: Fiji (1963, 1979, 2003), New Caledonia (1966, 1987, 2011), Papua New Guinea (1969, 1991, 2015) and Samoa (1983, 2007, 2019). Two territories have hosted the Pacific Games twice: French Polynesia (1971, 1995) and Guam (1975, 1999). The Solomon Islands will become the seventh country to host the event come 2023.

--GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION UNIT

Misinformation poses 'severe test' in Asia Pacific

SO called fake news about food safety and covid-19 has had a negative impact on consumption patterns and created anxiety among consumers in Asia Pacific.

Ahead of World Food Safety Day on June 7, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), organised a webinar called: Food safety in the new normal.

The event dealt with the negative impact of what was described as fake news and rumors, which have particularly impacted the meat and dairy sectors due to an incorrect association with covid-19. In some countries, dumping of imported fruits and vegetables has been observed. This was led by misinformation and caused unnecessary food waste.

Junshi Chen, chief scientific advisor to the China National Centre for Food Safety Risk Assessment, told listeners misinformation was posing a severe test to regulators, businesses and customers.

Tackling the emerging issue

Experts said authorities need to monitor inaccurate reports and put out clarifications as soon as possible on social media showing that food does not transmit covid-19 and no food protects against the virus. Fake news is an emerging issue that could undermine consumers' trust in food safety systems. It also affects businesses but transparency and education could mitigate the problem.

In China, fake news is considered as the second major food safety issue after foodborne diseases. These rumors affect consumers' trust in the food supply. The Chinese government asks experts to refute rumors from a scientific viewpoint. However, improving consumers' knowledge on food safety remains the key method to reduce the impact.

The FAO, OIE, WFP and WHO also detailed ongoing food safety activities in the Asia Pacific region and three guest panelists from government, industry and research from China, India and Singapore shared their perspectives on food safety in the post-pandemic scenario. A total of 1,505 people from 84 countries registered to attend the webinar, which has more than 4,600 views.

While during the new normal, food safety has benefitted from an increased awareness on good practice

on personal hygiene, in the future, regulatory frameworks with a long-term vision and that ensure consumers' protection will need to be put in place, according to FAO.

New food consumption patterns have been observed during lockdown where people have relied on delivery services and information on social media. Consumers are more aware of the importance of food safety and quality, demanding better and safer food.

FAO work in Asia Pacific

Masami Takeuchi, food safety officer at the FAO, highlighted the agency's activities in the region. One project aims to develop capacities to effectively participate in Codex Alimentarius. Ten countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are part of this project: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

FAO supports Codex Trust Fund projects in several countries, and will help new ones in nations such as Samoa and Solomon Islands. In past years, assistance was provided to Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Philippines to improve imported food control systems.

Since 2017, an initiative on food safety indicators has been piloted within the region. Bhutan, China, Cook Islands and the Philippines participated in the project, which confirmed the effectiveness of setting specific national food safety indicators. In conjunction to this project, in 2019, Bhutan also introduced food safety culture.

Under the FAO country projects, Bangladesh is improving national food safety institutional capacities while Cambodia is developing standards for Good Agricultural Practices for national certification. Indonesia has assessed national food control systems. Thailand has finished a project to strengthen food safety and quality control of livestock products. Pakistan is piloting a national program on street food safety, while Mongolia is developing systems for food control management and it is piloting quality assurance options for the private sector.

Topics suggested for future webinars included COVID-19 related issues on food safety, risk assessment, food safety at home and risk based inspection.

--FSN

Bilateral partnership on archaeological cooperation project continues

HISTORICAL research into the past of Solomon Islands and links with regional and global migration continues between the National Museum and its German stakeholders.

In a media statement yesterday, the Museum said though our cooperation partner from German Archaeological Institute cannot come to the Solomons this year due to covid-19 the research continues. Both teams from the Solomons and from Germany are working now on the scientific analysis, publications and the preparation for an exhibition.

The planned exhibition, Discovering the Past - Prehistory of the Solomon Islands is scheduled for 2021 and will give visitors a comprehensive overview of the archaeology and the prehistory of the Solomon Islands and will showcase archaeological objects uncovered during the field campaigns.

The exhibition will furthermore highlight and promote the successful cooperation between Germany and the Solomon Islands. The declared aim of the exhibition project is to inform the public about Solomon Islands Archaeology and make public and local communities realise their national heritage.

In 2011 the archaeological joint venture project "Prehistory of the Solomon

Islands" was initiated between the National Museum and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Solomon Islands and the Commission for Archaeology of Non-European Cultures (KAAK) of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI).

The objective of this long-term cooperation project is to enlighten the prehistory and the understanding of human migration dynamics and the specific processes of the initial settlement of the Solomon Islands.

An additional declared goal of the project is to train the field archaeologists of the National Museum in applied progressive excavation techniques and new scientific methods such as micro wear analysis, lithic technology, restoration and conservation techniques.

The Pacific Islands as a human environment

The peopling of the Pacific and the final colonization of the world is a long-standing process which started 40,000 years ago. Within this complex migration challenge Solomon Islands can be considered as an important 'Crossroad of Civilization and Cultures' in Melanesia.

From 2012 to 2019 excavations were carried out in East Are'Are near the villages of Maniaha and Maukaura on the island of

Malaita.

In the focus of the study are the two sites 'Apunirereha', a flint knapping workshop and the 'Ria Rockshelter' a dwelling site and burial place.

The open-air site 'Apunirereha' covers an area of approximately 3600 square metres. A test sounding was carried out in the southern part of this designated area. Due to the geological conditions in East Are Are, Malaita many rivers and streams are bearing chert boulders and pebbles. The local people of Apunirereha refer to these stones as 'nasi'.

In the area around Apunirereha these natural lithic sources were used in prehistoric times for raw material procurement. The chert boulders were prospected and brought as manuports to the site for further usage and the manufacturing of tools.

The excavation revealed a huge amount of lithic products in all stages of their manufacturing process.

The most prominent component of the lithic implements consists of knapped stone-adzes.

They occur -depending on their designated use- in different shapes and sizes.

The flint-knapping workshop or atelier of 'Apunirereha' can be considered as an outstanding centre for the manufacturing of

scrapers and adzes. A centre from where the lithic products were distributed as trading goods or barter objects.

The site Apunirereha is several thousands of years old.

The Ria rockshelter is located near the Hamlet of Makaura, close to Masupa. The rock overhang is formed by an isolated natural limestone cliff and served as a shelter for one to two families.

The rockshelter shows evidences of human presence in prehistoric times. Excavations at Ria disclosed cultural deposits and features and a large collection of knapped stone tools, shells and faunal remains.

The set of lithic implements consists of a great variety of stone tools. As ornaments diverse shell pectoral pendants were found. In the rear of the shelter seven burials were discovered. The burials have opened the possibility for anthropological and genetic analysis of the human remains.

Radiocarbon determinations has given a date of 1700 years ago.

The cooperation thanks all stakeholders for the support offered toward the success of the

project so far.

--NATIONAL MUSEUM PRESS

Covid-19 cases in Philippines soaring towards 287,000, worst infected in South-East Asia

THE number of confirmed Covid-19 (coronavirus) cases in the Philippines surged to 286,743 after the Department of Health (DOH) reported 3,311 new daily cases on Sunday. It remains the country with the worst infection record in South-East Asia.

The DOH said that the number of recoveries also surged to 229,865 after 20,021 more patients have survived the disease.

The DOH added that 55 more patients have suc-

cumbed to the viral disease, bringing the death toll to 4,984.

Metro Manila topped the five regions or provinces with the highest number of daily confirmed cases reported on Sunday with 1,435, followed by Negros Occidental in the central Philippines, 261; Laguna province, south of Manila, 231; Rizal province, east of Manila, 204; and Cavite province, south of Manila, 174.

The Philippines has tested

over 3.16 million people so far, according to DOH.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has decided to retain the one-metre physical distancing in public transportation to reduce virus transmission amid surging cases in the country, presidential spokesman Harry Roque said on Saturday.

"In addition to physical distancing, the commuting public must adhere to health protocols, such as wearing of face mask, face

shield, and no talking and no eating inside the public mode of transport," Roque said in a statement.

The decision came as health experts and government officials crafting the responses to Covid-19 have been debating for days on whether or not to reduce or keep the one-metre distance.

"We shall aggressively comply and strictly enforce the 1-meter physical distancing in all public transport as envisioned and man-

dated," the Department of Transportation (DOTr) said on Saturday.

The DOTr started implementing on Sept 14 a new physical distancing rule in public transport to accommodate more commuters as the lockdown measures are eased and the economy slowly reopens.

From 1-metre, the DOTr reduced the distance to 0.75 metres to increase ridership in buses, trains, planes and vessels.

The DOTr said the dis-

tance could be further "optimized" to 0.5 metres after two weeks and to 0.3 metres after another two weeks after that.

However the DOH and other officials in the coronavirus task force opposed the move, warning it could trigger a widespread transmission.

The World Health Organisation recommends at least 1-meter distance from each other to limit the spread of Covid-19.

--THE STAR