

COUNTDOWN BEGINS

HONIARA CELEBRATES ONE YEAR TO GO BEFORE SOL2023



HONIARA, the National capital of Solomon Islands was in full celebratory mode, Saturday 19th November 2022, as hundreds gathered to commemorate one year to go before the start of the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara next year.

The One-Year-To-Go celebrations launched the Official count-down to Games time. (Continue page 4 & 5)



WE ARE READY, ONE YEAR OUT

SOLOMON Islands is ready to host the XVII Pacific Games in Honiara next year.

With less than a year away to the start of the Sol2023 Pacific Games, preparations are on track with all Games infrastructure expected to be completed by July, 2023.

Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare made the assurances this month whilst hosting delegates from the Pacific Games Council and Chef de Mission from 19 of the 24 Pacific Island countries and territories who will be competing at next year's Games.

"I believe Solomon Islands is reasonably in good shape in our preparation and readiness to host the 2023 Pacific Games.

"The next 365 days will be the most crucial. It is when the most important preparations will take place to ensure that every single aspect of the Games planning and operational arrangements are put in place, tested and are functional."

Prime Minister Sogavare announced that all sports venues, accommodation and infrastructure will be completed before Games time next year.

"Based on our current schedules, all Games venues and villages will be completed and handed over

progressively to the National Hosting Authority (NHA) between January and June of 2023.

"The final venue – the National Stadium will be completed and handed over to NHA by July 2023.

"All accommodation villages will be ready by October, 2023.

"The main highway connecting the airport to all Games venues and Games villages will also be completed before the start of next year's Games," he said.

Prime Minister Sogavare assured the visiting regional delegates that Solomon Islands will do everything it can to ensure the 2023 Pacific Games is a success.

"From our perspective – we are ready to host and deliver the best Games we can.

"We will do everything within our ability to ensure your teams are looked after, protected and are safe when they come to compete during the 17th Pacific Games here in Honiara."

Prime Minister Sogavare meanwhile called on all stakeholders and citizens to work together with the National Hosting Authority and the Games Organizing Committee to deliver the best Games ever to be experienced in the region.

PGC satisfied with Games preparations

THE Pacific Games Council (PGC) is satisfied with the state of preparations Solomon Islands has achieved one year out from the start of the 2023 Pacific Games.

PGC President Vidhya Lakhan revealed this upon making a courtesy call to the Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare this month (November). During the visit, President Lakhan informed Prime Minister Sogavare that he is satisfied with the preparations so far, and from the meetings and feedbacks received from various sports stakeholders.

Mr Lakhan personally thanked the Prime Minister, and added that he was grateful to PM Sogavare and the Solomon Islands Government for the continuous support towards the successful hosting of the 17th Pacific Games in Honiara from 19th November to 2nd December, 2023.

"We are very impressed with what we have seen.

"We are twelve months away from the Games, but what we have seen and the state we are at – the present time and the shape we are in gives us a lot of comfort to know that come November 2023 we will be ready for the wonderful Games," Mr Lakhan said.

President Lakhan also took the opportunity to update Prime Minister Sogavare on the positive participation of other 24 countries, whilst emphasizing on the need to stay focused on successfully hosting the 2023 Pacific Games.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sogavare responded by



reassuring the PGC saying, "I can assure you we will not fail – the Pacific Games will be a success."

"From our (Solomon Islands) perspective – we are ready to host a successful 2023 Pacific Games.

"We will do everything within our ability to ensure that all 24 participating nations are well looked after, protected, and are safe when they come to compete at the Games next year.





GOC HOLDS ONE YEAR TO GO EVENT

■ Ezmie Oge | GOC Media Officer

THE Games Organizing Committee (GOC) this month (November) launched the One Year Countdown to next year's Sol2023 Pacific Games with a series of events all occurring on the 19th of November 2022.

The celebrations started with a float parade led by the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) from Whiteriver (the western end of Honiara) to Ranadi in the East.

A total of four Honiara schools namely; Whiteriver Community High School, Koloale Community School, Mbokonavera Community High School and St John School all took part in the colorful parade through the streets of Honiara, waving the flags of the 24 Pacific Islands Countries and Territories that will be competing at next year's Games.

The countries include; American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Norfolk Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis & Futuna, Australia and New



Zealand.

The celebrations continued with a Guard of Honor by members of the Solomon Islands Scouts Association (SISA) who led the procession with all 24 flags, including the host Country's and the Pacific Games Council flags.

Official addresses were made by the GOC Board Chairman, Mr Martin Rara, the NHA (National Hosting Authority) Board Chairman, Dr Jimmie Rodgers and Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare (who had his official address pre-recorded and played on the day).

The aim of the event was to celebrate the important milestones Solomon Islands has achieved since winning the Rights to host the 2023 Pacific Games and to commemorate a year to go before Games time.



PM ASSURES REGION OF “A THRILLING SAFE GAMES”

■ GCU Press

SOLOMON Islands Prime Minister, Hon. Manasseh Sogavare has assured the region of the host country's readiness to deliver one of the most thrilling and safest chapters of the Pacific Games come 2023.

The Prime Minister made the assurances at a dinner hosted for visiting delegates from the Pacific Games Council (PGC) Board and Chef de Missions from participating countries who were in Honiara this month (November) as Solomon Islands launched its “One Year Countdown” on Saturday 19th November, 2022.

“We will do everything within our ability to ensure your teams are looked after, protected, and safe when they come to compete during the 17th Pacific Games in November and December, 2023,” Mr Sogavare, who is also the Minister responsible for the Games said.

The Prime Minister expressed confidence that as a first-time host, Solomon Islands is in a reasonably good space in its preparation and readiness to host the Games.

Prime Minister Sogavare also took the time to assure the visiting delegates that all Games venues including the Games village will be ready on time and will progressively be handed over to the National Hosting Authority between January to October next year.

In doing so, Mr Sogavare paid tribute to international development partners that aided the construction of the Games facilities including the Games village, which, the Solomon Islands Government cannot fund alone.

“Hosting the Games is a catalyst for other infrastructure developments such as the Honiara International Airport upgrade and the Honiara main highway network worth billions of dollars from development partners, which are expected to be operational next year prior to the Games.”

Reflecting back on the last five years since Solomon Islands won the rights to host the 17th Pacific Games in 2023, Mr Sogavare said, “Winning the bid in 2017 to host the Games is a huge challenge for the Solomon Islands government with the Government committing SB\$550 million over a period of five years from 2019 to 2023.

“The challenges that looked so big after we won the bid to host the games in 2017 have transformed into opportunities that united our nation to stand together.

“The 2023 Pacific Games attracted more than a billion dollars’ worth of investment into the country's economy over the past eighteen months and is more than just a project, it has become the center piece of our economic recovery.”

Prime Minister Sogavare meanwhile acknowledged the efforts of Government Ministries, the Private Sector, SOE's, Churches, Civil Society, and other stakeholders in supporting the National Hosting Authority and the Games Organizing Committee to deliver the 17th Pacific Games next year.



Schools happy to take part in 1 Year to Go Celebration

■ Ezmie Oge | GOC Media Officer

SCHOOLS that were part of the Pacific Games 1-Year-To-Go celebrations have expressed gratitude towards the Games Organizing Committee (GOC) for involving them in the event held 19th November, 2022.

The event which commemorates 365 days to go before Solomon Islands historically hosts the 2023 Pacific Games, saw a total 32 students and staff from four schools in Honiara take part in the celebrations. The schools include; Whiteriver Community School, St John School, Koloale Community High School and Mbokonavera Community High School.

The event started with a float parade from Whiteriver to SINIS (Solomon Islands National Institute of Sports) – with each school representing four of the 24 countries that will be vying for medals at next year's Games.

This was then followed by the official program at SINIS which included a parade and guard of honor led by the Solomon Islands Scouts Association (SISA), followed by the speeches from GOC Board Chair, Mr Martin Rara, the National Hosting Authority (NHA) Board Chairman, Dr Jimmie Rodgers and a pre-recorded National Address by Prime Minister, Hon. Manasseh Sogavare.

The formal event also saw testimonials from former and current Solomon Islands athletes and the official cake cutting to commemorate 1-Year-To-Go before the 2023 Pacific Games.

"It is indeed an honor for our school to take part in this event.



"This as we are aware is a national event and to be considered by GOC to be one of the four schools to represent the 24 participating countries and the 24 sports is indeed an honor for our school," Whiteriver school teacher, Darren Viva said.

"This is a special day for us. We are very happy to take part in this event and count it a blessing to be able to witness, participate and be involved in the 1-Year-To-Go celebrations," an excited group of students from Mbokonavera said.

Similar sentiments were echoed by other participating staff and students spoken to – whilst many others could not hide their excitement of meeting Solo – the 2023 Pacific Games Official Mascot who also took part in the Float parade and also made its debut appearance at the event.

"We all loved Solo and its performance today – the students, we the staff and the general public. Solo truly is a representation of Solomon Islands," Mr Viva said. The 1-Year-To-Go event was aimed at celebrating the important milestones Solomon Islands has achieved since winning the bid to host the 17th Pacific Games in Honiara.

It was also the opportunity for the general public to engage and interact with Solo, the Mascot and most importantly to be informed, updated and educated about next year's historical Sol2023 Pacific Games.



SBD 1 Million Sponsorship for Pacific Games 2023

The Solomon Breweries limited (Solbrew) has announced a one million-dollar (\$1,000,000.00 SBD) Sponsorship with the Games organizing Committee (GOC) on Friday.

Speaking during the official announcement Solbrew's Cooperate Affairs Manager, Qila Tuhanuku, announced to the representatives from the media, that Solbrew company Limited is happy and proud to be a Bronze Sponsor and official supplier towards the 2023 Pacific games next year.

"Despite our challenges, the Pacific Games are essentially an opportunity to celebrate other parts and aspects of Solomon Islands that we have not been able to look at in the last three years and that is our sportsmen and women and the next generation of Sports," said Ms Tuhanuku.

She reiterated by saying, without the Pacific games a lot of Solomon Islanders would not have the opportunity to be able to showcase their talents, and added it is an honor to support the Pacific Games because when visitors come to Solomon Islands, they might not remember individual companies and what each does as an individual, but what they will remember as collective is, Government, citizens and Business. What we do together to provide them the experience of the Pacific Games from the Solomon Islands context is vital.

Solbrew Company Limited is the first business house to announce their sponsorship for the Pacific Games.

The Games Organising Committee (GOC) Chief Executive officer (CEO) Peter Stewart expressed his extreme happiness to Solomon Brewers company Limited for their support towards the Pacific Games; "The GOC are extremely pleased that a Solomon Island business the standing of Solomon Breweries has shown confidence in Sol2023 by becoming a Bronze Sponsor and Official Supplier to the Games. While there will be no beer sales within the venues, the responsible use of alcohol is an important message that the Games can assist with sending throughout the sporting community. We also welcome the opportunity for the exclusive use of SolBrew beer at all Sol2023 Pacific Games VIP and corporate functions, both in the lead up to and during the Games. "

The Solomon brewers limited Has been operating in the Solomon Islands since 1993, producing iconic brands; solbrew lager, canoe and SB. And 90 % of its employees are Solomon islanders.

The official sign up event was held at the Solomon Breweries Company Limited (Solbrew) offices and was attended by the members of the media, Solbrew company staff, the Chairman of GOC Board and GOC staff.



RSIPF to coordinate Sol2023 PG Security

THE Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) will be coordinating all security services during the Sol2023 Pacific Games in Honiara, from November 19th to December 2nd, 2023.

Assistant Commissioner Evelyn Thugea stated this in her presentation on 'Games Security' to Chef de Missions and delegates from 19 Pacific Island countries and territories who recently visited the 2022 Pacific Games host City – a year to go before Games time.

Ms Thugea said that services the RSIPF will provide at Games time include Asset Protection and Access Control. She further elaborated that all Games villages and venues will have a Police presence there whilst Officers will be stationed to provide security over all Games properties.

Assistant Commissioner Thugea added that the RSIPF will be supported by Contracted Security firms, Games staff plus Games Volunteers.

"We will all be looking over public behavior, crime and traffic management and control.

"Also, to manage the movement of people and traffic within the Games venues and villages," she said.

Meanwhile Assistant Commissioner Thugea assured the Chef de Missions of the RSIPF's commitment to ensuring that the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara is the safe and successful one.

Honiara City Council Mandated to lead "SAFE & GREEN" Games Program

■ GCU Press

THE Government through the National Hosting Authority (NHA) held successful discussions with the Honiara City Council on Friday 18 November on plans to beautify Honiara City for the Pacific Games 2023.

Chairman of the NHA Board and Secretary to Prime Minister, Dr Jimmie Rodgers informed the Honiara City Council Mayor and his executive, that the National Government and the National Hosting Authority stands ready to support HCC to ensure it carries out its mandated role and task in implementing the Safe and Green Games Action Plan aimed at Beautifying Honiara, as hosts to the 2023 Pacific Games.

Dr Rodgers said that the NHA's main objective is to deliver the Pacific Games with the support of all stakeholders, but at the same time stands ready to assist HCC in its work in beautifying the city prior to the Games.

The HCC is mandated to manage and govern the city affairs, and is a key stakeholder for implementing the Safe and Green Games initiative.

Chair of GSIC, Bernard Bata'anisia presented the Safe and Green Games Action Plan stating that the plan is the key single document incorporating all Ministerial and Stakeholder activities to support the Pacific Games.

He added that in the Safe and Green Games, HCC has an important role to play, such as cleaning and beautifying the city with the support of all Stakeholders.

City Mayor Eddie Siapu thanked the Government and the NHA for their confidence and noted that HCC as host City will work together with the NHA to implement its activities in line with the Safe and Green Games Plan.

He said that HCC needs the support of the Government, NHA and all Stakeholders including Donor Partners, to successfully implement the Safe and Green Games Action Plan.

Meanwhile the meeting was part of the GSICs outreach program with key Stakeholders on the Safe and Green Games.



“Aircraft Approvals won’t be an issue at Games time”

SECRETARY to Prime Minister (SPM) and Chair of the National Hosting Authority (NHA), Dr Jimmie Rodgers assured Chef de Missions (CDMs) that there will be no problems with approvals of chartered aircrafts coming in to Solomon Islands during next year’s 2023 Pacific Games.

Dr Rodgers revealed this at a farewell dinner hosted for CDMs from 19 Pacific Island countries and territories who were in the country this month to witness the state of preparations one year prior to the opening of the 2023 Pacific Games.

In answering questions posed by the CDMs regarding approvals for chartered international aircrafts, Dr Rodgers assured them that approvals will not be an issue. “We can assure you there will be no problems with approvals of chartered aircrafts coming into Solomon Islands.

“All we will require from you (each country) is the timing, the aircraft types, the number of passengers and crews. “We have been doing this (granting approvals) during the covid period as well with chartered aircrafts coming in to the country – so approvals will not be an issue,” Dr Rodgers said.

Speaking on the largest sized aircraft that can land at the Honiara International Airport, Dr Rodgers said, “I have it from the airline authority that the largest aircraft that we can have landing in Honiara is a 767-200. We can also accommodate an Airbus 330.”



Dr Rodgers said that it is Solomon Islands commitment to ensure that the 2023 Pacific Games runs smoothly and as safe as possible for everyone.

MEMBERS of the business community were part of the Sol2023 Pacific Games Organizing Committee's (GOC) series of events hosted on the 18th and 19th of this month (November) to mark one year to go before the opening ceremony of the 17th Pacific Games here in Honiara next year.

The GOC in partnership with SICCI (Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry) co-hosted a Business After 5 (BA5) networking event on Friday 18th November, 2022 – whereby businesses were updated on Games preparations, progresses and opportunities for partnership with businesses one year out from the 2023 Pacific Games.

Like any other event around the world, the 2023 Pacific Games is expected to leave behind long term benefits for local businesses in the Solomon Islands as part of the legacy benefits of hosting the biggest sporting event in the Pacific Region.

Some of these long-term benefits include capacity building of the local workforce, capacity building of local businesses, infrastructure improvements, promotion of Solomon Islands for businesses, business to business facilitation, streamlining government processes and attraction of hosting future events.

GOC Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Peter Stewart stressed that the Games has a unique ability to build the capacity of the workforce within the country.

“Thousands of people will be involved in the delivery of this Games and through that process, they will get training, get experience, opportunity to grow within their carriers and we know from experience from other Games that the capacity of the workforce greatly improves by their involvement in these sorts of events.”

Mr Stewart said that infrastructure improvement which are of great benefit to businesses is always a legacy for the Pacific Games.

“For Solomon Islands, as a result of hosting the Games, it would lead to improvement to the country's international airport, improvement to various venues which will all provide an opportunity for businesses to be able to prosper into the future.”

He said that they will continue to work with SICCI to ensure that local businesses are taking to each other and working together to be able to provide the services that will be needed during the Games process.

“Because of the very huge involvement of Government, you tend to find that this helps to streamline Government processes and give a level of understanding to Government ministries about how they can support major projects of this nature and that therefore obviously provides a benefit to businesses in the long term as well,” Mr Stewart said.

SICCI CEO, Ms Natalina Hong acknowledged the GOC for their ongoing engagement with SICCI and its members of the business community.

Ms Hong said business participation before and after the Games has many opportunities for the benefit of the country's local economy.

“A significant benefit for Solomon Islands is the long-term investment which comes from preparing for such a major event like the Pacific Games.

“The most notable infrastructure development project the



Sol2023 marks “One-Year-To-Go” with business community

Solomon Islands Government in collaboration with the Japanese Government are undertaking the Kukum Highway Upgrade Project, which is also part of preparing Honiara City for Sol2023.”

Ms Hong acknowledges the national commitment towards the infrastructure development which will also be beneficial for businesses and investment along with other development partners who have also significantly supported the country in its preparations for Sol2023.

“The current Kukum Highway Upgrade Project and the recent commitments from JICA to upgrade our international airport will improve efficiency in mobility and drastically- give a much-needed facelift to our capital city,” she said.

The SICCI CEO said development in key fundamental areas like communication, energy and transportation will redirect Solomon Islands' economy to improve the investment climate so businesses can grow to benefit the community.

“When Solomon Islands successfully delivers the 2023 Pacific Games, as a country it will be able to showcase a range of venues it has which have the capacity to attract future major events and in turn be able to provide economic development to Solomon Islands and the businesses associated in the country,” Ms Hong said.

Meanwhile the Sol2023 One-Year-To-Go celebrations held on the 19th of November, 2022 started with a float parade from Whiteriver in the western end of Honiara City to Ranadi in the east. This was followed by the official celebrations held at the Solomon Islands National Institute of Sport (SINIS).

OUR Partnership OUR Turtles OUR GAMES



■ Ezmie Oge | GOC Media Officer

In 2007, a fisherman from Haeva found a female leatherback turtle with a satellite tag attached on her back at Haevo Nesting ground. A satellite tag is used to track migratory movement of leatherback turtles from their feeding area to their breeding grounds.

It was believed that the satellite tag had been attached from researchers in California (USA). This would have been done on the female leatherback turtle during her feeding season around the coast of California, USA.

The Turtle made the long trip home to Haevo. Where her tracker was removed. Thus, began the awareness throughout the community to protect leatherbacks in and around Haevo. The people of Haevo made the commitment and common agreement to protect the 2 kilometers of the nesting beach at Haevo.

This became the official conservation area in 2012 and they named it Haevo Khulano Integrated Conservation Centre, which is located within the Maringe Kokota Constituency in Isabel Province. Today it is one of the respected marine conserved areas.

Haevo Khulano integrated conservation Centre aims to conserve, manage and protect leatherback nesting population at Haevo, in its early stage the Centre started with 12 male rangers and recently included female rangers bringing to a total of 22 rangers mostly from the nearby villages.

The longest serving ranger at Haevo Khulano, Rodney Hens, stated that as a ranger, "it is our main task to monitor leatherbacks, insert and tighten their tags, collect DNA samples and make reports. Around October

to February every year it is the peak time for these leatherbacks to come and nest at the Haevo nesting ground," he said.

Peter Waldin who is acting Director for Nature conservancy Solomon Islands for leatherback satellite tagging explained that "the satellite tagging aims to collect information of the leatherbacks through tracking and analyzing their movements during their nesting season and post nesting. We aim to tag at least ten leatherback turtles each season," he said.

"Ever since I learned that the Games Mascot is a turtle, I believe this was the beginning of a strong partnership with the Games organizing Committee (GOC) to advocate for the conservation of our turtles," he expressed.

Ever Since the unveiling of the Games mascot in May of this year, 2022, The Nature Conservancy Solomon Islands is happy to work in partnership with the Games organizing committee, was the sponsor of the mascot naming competition as part of the Partnership. Further to also naming a live leatherback turtle after the Games Mascot - Solo.

As alluded to by the GOC Chief Executive officer Peter Stewart (CEO) "The fact that Solomon Islands represents the largest turtle hatchery in the Pacific and the fact that the Games Mascot is a sea turtle itself - makes the link between the Games and TNCSI a natural fit" during the establishment of their partnership in October, 2022.

SOL2023 GAMES VILLAGES AND VENUES

CHEF de Missions (CDM) and official delegates from 19 Pacific Island Countries and Territories were this month given brief tours of the various Games venues and villages that will be used at next year's 2023 Pacific Games here in Honiara.

The brief tour covered in total six Games villages and twelve Games venues in Honiara. The Games villages include;

- St. Joseph Tenaru School
- Don Bosco School
- King George VI School
- Solomon Islands National University (Panatina Campus)
- Solomon Islands National University (Kukum Campus)
- St. Nicholas Anglican College

Services that will be provided at the Games villages include; Catering (Breakfast), Cleaning and Waste, Security, Transport Mall, Team Vehicle Parking, Laundry Services, Internet Connectivity, Entertainment Area, Information Desk, Temporary toilets & showers, Convenience store, Team meeting rooms and Money exchange transfer services.

The Games venues and sporting competitions that will take place there include;

- DC Park – Archery, Sailing, Vaá and Touch Rugby
- Don Bosco Hall – Karate
- Maranatha Hall – Weightlifting, Bodybuilding and Powerlifting
- SIFF Academy – Football and Beach Volleyball
- Hockey Stadium – Hockey
- National Stadium – Rugby League, Rugby 7s and Athletics
- Aquatic Centre – Swimming
- National Tennis Court – Tennis
- Friendship Hall – Indoor Volleyball and Table Tennis
- Honiara Golf Club – Golf
- Lawson Tama – Football
- HCC Sport Centre – Basketball, Boxing and Basketball 3x3

The 2023 Pacific Games will take place from 19 November to 2nd December, 2023.

GAMES LIVE MASCOT

For the first time in Games History, there will be a live representative of the Official Games Mascot – Solo the Leatherback Turtle!

Recently a team from the Games Organising Committee (GOC) traveled to Haevo Khulano Integrated Conservation Centre, to witness the satellite tagging of leatherback turtles, with Solo the Games Mascot.

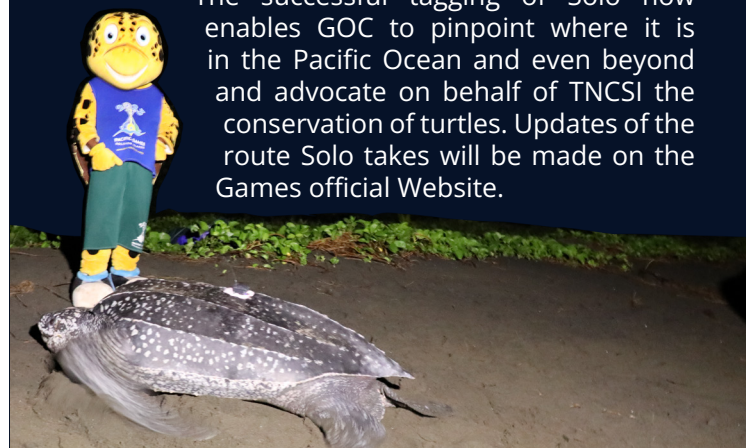
Valerie Hilly, Project Officer of GOC explained that; "the satellite tagging of a leatherback turtle called Solo is part of the partnership with The Nature Conservancy Solomon Islands (TNCSI) and the GOC to advocate for the conservation of turtles in the Pacific.

At 4:00am, before dawn, the team trudged through rich black sand for 2 kilometers to the nesting grounds, with the Haevo Khulano rangers, to witness Solo the leatherback turtle - which was 167 centimeters in length, climb up the beach to lay her eggs.

Solo the Games Mascot eagerly greeted its namesake and witnessed its tagging and had a sendoff with well wishes for safe travels from now until Games time, 2023.

"It was amazing to see the enthusiasm of these Rangers protecting the leatherback nesting population at Haevo nesting ground. We believe we too can do the same by protecting our endangered species whether it be Hawksbill, Green or leatherback turtles", expressed team leader, Valerie Hilly.

The successful tagging of Solo now enables GOC to pinpoint where it is in the Pacific Ocean and even beyond and advocate on behalf of TNCSI the conservation of turtles. Updates of the route Solo takes will be made on the Games official Website.



Malaria will be down by Games time: Dr Rodgers



ATHLETES attending the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara need not to worry about mosquito bites and malaria – as work has now commenced to try and reduce malaria prevalence in Honiara by Games time next year.

Secretary to Prime Minister and Chair of the National Hosting Authority, Dr Jimmie Rodgers revealed this, when farewelling Chef de Missions from 19 Pacific Island

countries and territories who were here in Honiara this month (November).

“Just to share with you, the Solomon Islands Government have started a program to try and get malaria in Honiara down to a level where we do not need to worry about by Games time next year.

“We have a strategy to basically clean Honiara, remove all the mosquito breeding sights and reduce mosquito population.”

Dr Rodgers revealed that the Solomon Islands Government will in February launch a whole of Government and Private Sector Strategy focused at cleaning up Honiara City in preparation for the 2023 Pacific Games.

“The strategy will be key to eliminating malaria in Honiara before the Games.

“You can all be assured that the malaria prevalence in Honiara would be low by the time you all arrive back for the Games around this time next year.

“It is and will be our commitment to ensure that when you come for the Games- you need not to worry about malaria, but only about getting your medals,” Dr Rodgers said.

SOL2023 PG will feature 24 countries & 24 sports

THE Sol2023 Pacific Games in Honiara next year will feature a total 24 Pacific Island countries and territories compete in 24 sports programs between November 19th to December 2nd, 2023.

President of the Pacific Games Council, Vidhya Lakhan confirmed this whilst in Solomon Islands this month (November) for Chef de Missions meeting – a year to go before the Games.

“The 2023 Pacific Games will be the largest event to be hosted in Solomon Islands where we will have 24 countries from the Pacific and their delegates take part in a two-week sporting event here in Honiara.

“The PGC Executive Board has deliberated and decided that all 24 member countries are to be present at the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara.

“In ensuring that, the Council will be paying the airfares of one male and one female athlete from each nation,” President Lakhan said.

He said that in the Council doing so, all member countries should not have any excuses and must all be present at next year’s Games.

“We must have representatives. It’s a meeting of the Pacific family and you are all members of the family, therefore you should all make every effort to be present at the Games next year,” President Lakhan said.

The 24 member countries include: American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Guam, New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis & Futuna, Australia and New Zealand.

The 24 sports to be competed at the Games include: Athletics, Archery, Basketball, Bodybuilding, Boxing, Football, Golf, Hockey, Judo, Karate, Netball, Powerlifting, Rugby 7’s, Rugby League 9’s, Sailing, Swimming, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Tennis, Triathlon, Touch Rugby, Volleyball (Indoor & Beach), Vaa and Weightlifting.

Service held to Commemorate 1-Year-To-Go before PG2023

■ Ezmie Oge | GOC Media Officer

A COMBINED Church service was held to commemorate one-year-to-go to the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara this month (November).

The Solomon Islands Government through the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs in partnership with the Solomon Islands Christian Association, hosted the service at the Saint Barnabas Cathedral, Sunday 20th November, 2022.

Held under the theme; “Come Let’s Celebrate in the Body of Christ, Preparing for Pacific Games 2023”, the combined service – an important spiritual activity marking 365 Days before the Games commences, was aimed at bringing all Christians to come together and pray for next year’s historical event.

The Church service brought around hundreds of Christians from various denominations in the country both as participants in the service, whilst many others as part of the congregation in attendance.

Guests in attendance included His Excellency the Governor General, the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice, Government Ministers, Members of Parliament, Constitutional Post Holders, Diplomatic and Consular Corps and other Senior Government Officials within Honiara City.

The 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara will be held between November 19th to December 2nd next year.





CDMs confident 2023 PG on track

CHEF de Missions (CDM) from Pacific Island states that will be competing at the 2023 Pacific Games have expressed confidence that preparations for next year's Games are on track.

A total of 30 CDM's plus other team officials representing 19 countries were in the country this month to witness preparations and the state of progress Solomon Islands is in one year before the start of the 2023 Pacific Games.

The countries represented include: American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis & Futuna, Australia and New Zealand.

During their weeklong stay in the country, the CDM's visited the various Games villages and Games venues and held fruitful consultations with the Games Organizing Committee (GOC) where they were updated on the 2023 Pacific Games Sports program.

The 24 sports to be competed at next year's Games include: Athletics, Archery, Basketball, Bodybuilding, Boxing, Football, Golf, Hockey, Judo, Karate, Netball, Powerlifting, Rugby 7's, Rugby League 9's, Sailing, Swimming, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Tennis, Triathlon, Touch Rugby, Volleyball (Indoor & Beach), Vaá and Weightlifting.

"On behalf of all the CDMs we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the NHA (National Hosting Authority) and the GOC (Games Organizing Committee) for the magnificent hospitality that we have enjoyed here in the Solomon Islands the past few days.

"You and your respective teams have been such fantastic hosts and it has been such a great opportunity for us to

have been invited to come to the Solomon Islands and see in person just a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes – and the information we have received.

"We (CDMs) believe and we are confident that the Games are on track and we are excited for next year," Gay Li-Jan Uera of Nauru said whilst speaking on behalf of the delegates at a farewell dinner hosted by GOC.



GOC Accommodation Officer, Jessie Konofilila explains accomadation to CDM and Officials

She added that the CDMs will now go back equipped with the relevant information to share with their PGA's to continue planning and preparing their teams for next year's Games.

"We are absolutely excited and we look forward to the Pacific Games 2023."



Jim Marau

- SOLOMON ISLANDS' SOLE-SPRINT KING

Many Solomon Islanders in today's generation idolize sprint legends such as Jamaica's Usain Bolt or the USA's Justin Gatlin as the fastest men in the world – the kings of the 100 and 200meters sprint events.

Little do they know that Solomon Islands once had its own Sprint King, who against all odds won the country's first and only ever gold medal in the 100meters sprint event at the 1975 South Pacific Games in Guam. A feat that is yet to be replicated 47 years on.

Meet Jim Marau – a name that may only be known to a few in the country but very much recognized in the history books as being Solomon Islands first ever gold medalist at the regions most prestigious event – the South Pacific Games.

"I was introduced to the sport (100meters sprint) in my early 20s when I was a student of the college (now Solomon Islands National University).

"Solomon Islands was then still a British Colony. We didn't have any state-of-the-art training facilities, equipment – but we did have very good coaches who trained us very well.

"Discipline was very strong at that time – we the athletes never indulged ourselves in social activities, drugs or alcohol. We were all committed to represent the British Solomon Islands and determined to do our nation proud," the softly spoken Jim Marau recalled how it all started.

Asked what the selection criteria and requirements were to represent the country at any international event? Jim said that sprinters had to run really fast times and had to do it consistently.

"All of us running the 100meters sprints were required to run below the 11 second mark. It was either you win with a very quick time and get selected or you lose, go back to the drawing board and start strategizing again."

The 1975 South Pacific Games in Guam was Jim's first international outing after scooping the national 100meters title in a time of 10.7 seconds in Honiara – a year prior to the Games.

"I headed to Guam the Solomon Islands 100meters champion – however no one but my fellow countrymen knew that – knew who I was, what I was capable of. I was a champion in my own right – not at all a champ in the eyes of my regional rivals and competitions."

Jim said he went to Guam as the underdog – fully aware of his potential and capabilities but not expecting much from his first international outing.



"Going into the competition I didn't expect much. I was literally unknown – an outsider – the underdog some may say.

"No one had really heard of a sprinter – let alone any sprinter from the British Solomon Islands, yet here I was, carrying the weight and expectation of my people on my shoulders, determined to do my nation, my people and my family proud," Jim recalled.

Jim's confidence grew by each race – his timings also improved race by race.

"In the 100meters heats I first clocked 11 seconds and then dropped to 10.9 seconds and then 10.7 seconds. I did this winning all my heats including the semi-finals.

"I was the new kid on the block – I started getting noticed by the other sprinters. That however did not distract my focus and concentration as I knew I could still run faster than previously," he said.

Recalling the 1975 SPG 100meters final, Jim said that all he was focused on was to run his own race – burst out of the blocks as quick as he can, and then run as fast as he can toward the finish line.

"The final was indeed the highlight. There were the race favorites from New Caledonia and French Polynesia (Tahiti) and then there was me – the underdog.

"But I had my strategy which was to burst out of the blocks as soon as I can, my eyes fixed on my lane and to sprint as fast as I could toward the finish line," he said.

Merely 10seconds later, Jim had created history for himself and his tiny island nation that would three years later attain independence from Britain and be known as the Solomon Islands.



Source: News Drum | 1975

"I clocked my fastest time in that SPG final. I won gold for my country and earned the recognition from other sprinters as the 100meters champion of the region. This was beyond my expectations – my wildest dreams," he said.



Jim's historical achievements did not stop there as he went on to scoop bronze in the 200meters and 4x400meters relay and silver in the 4x100meters relay.

To date, Jim Marau remains to be the country's only athlete to win four medals at any major event, and the only Solomon Islander to win the 100meters sprint at any South Pacific Games.

Whether Jims achievements would be repeated is a question that remains to be seen come the Sol2023 Pacific Games which will be held in Honiara from November 19th to December 2nd, 2023.

GOC take part in 1st SINIS Expo

THE Games Organizing Committee (GOC) took part in the first ever Athletes Career and Education Expo hosted by the Solomon Islands National Institute of Sport (SINIS) in Honiara this month (November).

Under the theme; "Supporting Athletes Through Dual Career Opportunities" the event (an initiative of SINIS's Well-Being and Lifestyle Unit) was aimed at helping and supporting athletes find jobs and employment opportunities whilst playing sports.

GOC's Human Resource Department was one of 40 stakeholders and SINIS partners that took part in the Expo with an estimated over 300 athletes in attendance. SINIS's Lifestyle and Well-Being Coordinator, Paul Taka said, "SINIS is responsible for athlete sport-life and their well-being and we are committed to help support athletes find jobs."

Mr Taka said that their according recent statistics, they have discovered that more than 85% of athletes are unemployed, adding that their findings have also shown that 90% of all athletes that come to SINIS are financially unstable.



Photo Source: facebook/SINIS

"We came up with this initiative (Expo) to expose our athletes to every available opportunity that would help them to seek job opportunities – ensure their futures are safe even whilst committed to the various sports programs they are in.

"This is the opportunity for our athletes to find jobs and at the same time for companies, organizations, our stakeholders to scout for human resource relevant to their organizations," he said.

Meanwhile Mr Taka said that the Athlete Career and Expo will be an annual event.



Wishing you all

Merry Christmas
and a prosperous
Happy New Year

SOL2023 XVII Facebook Page surpassing the 100k mark

■ Ezmie Oge | GOC Media Officer

THE Sol2023 XVII Facebook page has reached more than 100,000 views with less than a year to go before the start of the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Since the start of the Games' Community Engagement program in August this year and the debut of Solo, the Official Games Mascot on social media, the Sol2023 Facebook page has grown rapidly in its views, likes and followings.

A brief data analysis showed extensive followings in the following countries; Solomon Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Vanuatu, United States, American Samoa and Nauru.

"These are the countries that have the highest number of followings in our Facebook page.

"This is truly encouraging as it shows people are now starting to be aware of our preparations for next year's Pacific Games," GOC Communications Coordinator Jeremy Inifiri said.

Asked what seemed to be the reason for such huge social media followings? Mr Inifiri said that extensive coverage of Solo the Mascot's nationwide tour throughout the provinces of Solomon Islands is the main contributing factor.

"Since August this year, we have covered Solo the Mascot's every tour to the provinces." Solo is indeed creating head waves and making headlines everywhere it goes and people are constantly following Solo on Facebook.

"This I believe is the major contributing factor towards this rapid increase in figures."

Mr Inifiri also revealed that the introduction of new material and contents has helped boost the Sol2023

Pacific Games brand on Social Media.

"We have ventured into producing more fun, informational social media contents such as podcasts, quizzes, news bulletins and athlete testimonials that we believe is also contributing to the big number of followings we now receive on social media.

"We believe very much in engaging and interacting with our audiences not only on Facebook but also all other social media platforms that would help spread awareness, information and educate people about the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara," he said.

The Games One-Year-To-Go celebrations marked on the 19th of this month (November) is also sure to be another factor contributing to the huge numbers.

Meanwhile the Pacific Games will be held in Honiara from 19th November to 2nd December, 2023.





PACIFIC GAMES
SOLOMON ISLANDS

