

PROTEST AT N

Disputes over ownership of lands in Ngerkebesang spilled over from the Judicial Building in Medalaii to the streets of Koror's southern hamlet this week. On Monday, March 9, over 50 people of Ngerkebesang gathered with signs to protest at the entrance of Echol, a section in the hamlet where 17 lots which were subject of a recent lawsuit, are located.

It all started with an appellate ruling of the Palau Supreme Court last month awarding the ownership of 17 lots to Rosamunda Tubeifo, Florentine Yangilmau, Faustino Tirso, Kuterbis Kutermaiei, Sumor Allis, Quadalupe Carlos, and Mariano Carlos who are all originally from the southwest island. The Court denied the claims of the original clans of Ngerkebesang including Omrekongel Clan, Odilang Clan, and Lulk Clan.

On February 10, 1997, the trial court affirmed an LCHO decision awarding titles to the southwest islanders. Ngerkebesang clans then appealed but Chief Justice Arthur Ngiraklsong, and Associate Justices Larry Miller and Barrie Michelsen on February 20 affirmed the decisions of the lower court.

On March 4, 1998, the people of Ngarkebesang sent a petition to Chief IBEDUL Yutaka Gibbons expressing their grievance. In the petition, they said that the people of the Southwest Islands were brought to Koror to live because a typhoon devastated their island in 1903. When they had first come to Koror, they were brought by Ibedul Illengelekei to Ngerbodel to live but because of difficulties that they encountered, they were al-

continue on page 10

Ngerkebesang Protest _____

lowed by Espangel Ewatel pursuant to Palau custom of generosity to live at Echang, Ngerkebesang. They moved to another place during the war but returned after and the Ngerkebesang Chiefs let them settle in Echang. The petition went on to say that the people residing in Echang are selling these lands and that Ngerkebesang people are living on. They want to reclaim all the lands in Echol as original owners and will employ any means through custom or any other measure to take back their lands. The petition was signed by over 100 people of Ngerkebesang.

When Tia Belau interviewed Inabo Katsumi, who holds the title of Mad ra Tol and spokesperson for Espangel, the highest ranking Chief of Ngerkebesang, at the site of demonstration, he said the demonstration will continue until some sort of agreement is reached between both parties and the Palau courts. He said the demonstration is peaceful and that he has asked Public Safety to send Patrol cars once in a while to insure that peace is observed.

People of southwest island states of Sonsorol and Hatohobei were considered non-Palauans as they have different language and culture which are closer to those of outer islands of Yap and Chuuk of the FSM. They came to Koror in 1903 during the German occupation when their islands were destroyed by a typhoon. They were relocated in Eang village in Ngerkebesang with the agreement of High Chief Ibedul of Koror and Espangel of Ngerkebesang. They have resided in Eang since then and their names were registered in the Japanese Land Registration (Tochi Daichio) as owners of the lands in Eang and Echol which was the basis of their victory in Court.

Power Plant _____

Rengiil said that the money confiscated from him, was sent to him by his relatives from Guam to buy fish to be sent.

In another case, Jeanette Desebel Morrison, a 39-year old female, was arrested on February 28, at 9:50 p.m. at the Palau International Airport and charged with trafficking in controlled substance-Marijuana. Morrison was caught while trying to ship 23.10 lbs. of Marijuana sealed in the sides of a cooler containing clam meat and crabs. Public Safety officers coordinated with the Customs and Conservation officers in the arrest of Jeanette whom they suspect to be a courier for one of the drug rings operating between Guam and Palau.

Man caught smuggling ICE into jail

Meo Tomei who was sentenced to serve two years in Koror jail with three years suspended sentence was caught on February 20 with one plate of Metamphetamine"ICE" in his possession just five days after he began serving his sentence. Tomei was arrested on May 30, 1997 on charges and later convicted of possession and trafficking in "ICE".

A few days after he began serving his sentence, Tomei was hospitalized after complaining about irregular breathing. Upon returning to Koror jail Tomei was searched by prison guards who found a plate of "ICE" in his pockets. Tomei is now confined to his cell and is being charged for illegal possession of a controlled substance under the new anti-drug laws.

Crimes Pay _____

bery of \$100,000 sent through mail from City Bank in Guam to the Pacific Savings Bank in Palau on March 11, 1997.

The cash in a sack was taken at the airport in Airai after arrival of Continental