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Picture: The Kalibobo Express & Kalibobo Diver

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MELANESIAN NEWS

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

| Ship cuts off power to Madang Island | A Weekend in Madang with Kalibobo Spirit

Kalibobo Spirit: surviving despite global pandemic

PNG owned Expeditionary Cruise vessel still continues its services despite the pandemic.

MTS' Kalibobo Spirit had survived the global pandemic from last year said Wesley Hantan, MTS' Operations Manager.

"We have taken a few charters and have done a cruise up to the Sepik River despite the challenges that COVID-19 has placed on our usual scheduled operations."

Wesley also said that they will be expecting a charter to New Zealand early this year.

"The Kalibobo Spirit is expected to go to New Zealand and it will be chartered by Heritage Expedition."

The Kalibobo Spirit has suffered a loss during 2020, "a number of our Sepik River bookings were lost due to the pandemic-restrictions on travel," said Wesley.

Kalibobo Spirit's Captain, Joe Saukilagi said that the reduction in tourism will likely continue through 2021.

"We can't see any light at the end of the tunnel and I know that it will possibly mean that we will have to commence our scheduled cruises in 2022 or even 2023."

Dive Instructors welcome new dive boat



Nathan with the Kalibobo Diver at the Madang resort marina.

Madang's only PADI Dive facility welcomes its brand-new dive boat.

The dive boat called Kalibobo Diver made its way to the Madang resort's marina yesterday after being cleared from customs.

Niugini Dive Adventures' (NDA) dive instructors were pleased to welcome their brand-new dive vessel.

Naca (Nathan) Yavala,

Tetsuya Nakamura, NDA's co-dive instructor.

"The vessel can also be used to carry vehicles, making it easier to assist people that would like to transport their vehicles to the outer islands."

The vessel was built in Thailand and had made its way to Papua New Guinea to commence its operations.

This dive boat also comes as a 'post-pandemic' marketing strategy as described by the Melanesian Tourist Services (MTS) Operations Manager, Wesley Hantan.

"A lot of people are thinking of what had happened in 2020, regarding the pandemic, we have already invested in more facilities to plan ahead."

MTS has already purchased a Madang ferry called Kalibobo Express that will arrive in PNG mid this year.

MTS continues to invest in the future of tourism in PNG.

NDA's Chief Dive Instructor recently described the new dive vessel as a change to their facilities.

"We already have some very good dive boats here, but this brand-new Kalibobo Diver is a better, faster dive boat."

The dive boat comes fully equipped with a front ramp, "this would make it much easier for us to carry passengers to islands," said



Madang Rotary celebrates 2020

Madang's most historical charity organization has recently thanked its partners, families and friends for a successful year.

The Madang Rotary Club had a Christmas function on Monday the 22nd at the Maureen Hill nursery school.

The small gathering had representatives from various business houses, tourism facilities, educational institutions, which included the Self-Help Learning Centre for the Disabled, the Christian Women's Association (CWA) and friends and family of the Rotary Club.

Steven Kaipa, Madang's Rotary Club President thanked the Madang community that attended the function.

Steven said that despite the tough year the Madang Rotary Club had successfully raised ample funds to carry out their projects.

"We had successfully held 2 successful events, despite the pandemic, and it is all thanks to everyone here tonight."

Steven also thanked the Madang Resort and the Melanesian Tourist Services Ltd (MTS) for assisting the Rotary Club with its pageant and recently, "another successful Christmas Pageant."

"We thank Sir Peter

Barter and his staff from both the Madang Resort and the Melanesian Tourist Services for their tireless efforts towards assisting the Rotary to accomplish 2 main events despite the tough protocols, due to the current pandemic."

Maureen Hill, a pioneer member of the Madang Rotary Club, also thanked the Madang community that attended the Rotary Christmas Function.

"I just want to remind you all that the Madang Rotary Club is driven by all of us, we all have done and accomplished so much this year and for that I would like to thank you all."

Maureen is a long serving member of the Madang Rotary Club, a former member of the Madang Lion's Club, a driving force behind the Red Cross, CWA, Modlion General Hospital, Melanesian Foundation, the Self-Help Learning Centre for the disabled and City Mission.

The function was filled with laughter and happiness as gifts and smiles were exchanged.

"We have gone through a tough and a very challenging year, but this shows what we can do when we all come together," said Steven.

Logging Ship cuts off power to Madang Island



The ship and a picture of an older submarine cable.

On Sunday the 10th of January, an Asian logging ship recently entered the Madang harbor allegedly causing a power outage to Krangket Island.

Eye witness reports have claimed that the ship had destroyed a submarine power cable that had brought power to more than 3000 people on the island.

Allegations have claimed that the ship had dragged its anchor along the sea floor destroying a submarine cable that passed through the passage between the Madang Resort and the island.

The cost of the damage is estimated to be more than

K500,000.

The logging ship's intended route was, "a stopover at the main Madang wharf for custom's clearance before continuing onto Bunabun to collect its log, this ship will then continue to Oro province where it will collect some more of its cargo before departing PNG," said PNG Customs Manager, Anthony Brabar.

The council member for Krangket Island, Rodney Selarn had conveyed his frustration during a meeting with the agent of the ship, representatives of PNG Power,

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Madang welcomes the New Year



Tetsuya and Joe during the New Year Buffet Dinner at the Madang Resort's Haus Win Restaurant

Madang's historical resort welcomed the new year with a memorable new year celebration.

The Madang resort recently celebrated the New Year with a large number of the Madang community all gathered at the resort's Haus Win Restaurant.

The gathering had several business organizations, families, guests from the resort, church organizations, the Madang Rotary, Christian Women Association and the Self-Help Learning Centre for the disabled.

Niugini Dive Instructor, Tetsuya Nakamura and Kalibobo Spirit's Captain, Joe Saukilagi were also present during the celebration with other staff members from the Madang Resort, Niugini Dive Adventures and the Melanesian Tourist Services Ltd (MTS).

Tetsuya described the evening as a Madang resort tradition.

"Ever since I started working here, the highlight of my year would have to be

the festive celebrations here at the resort, there is so much to do that usually starts from Christmas till the New Year."

Joe also commended the efforts of the staff from the resort.

"Our team here at the resort have proven themselves to be the best during this challenging year, somehow we managed to have a successful year finishing off with these delightful festive celebrations."

Joe also described the event as a way of bringing happiness back into the lives of many.

"For many of us, we are far away from our families, but it is good to share the happiness with so many of our friends, we are proud to also call our families here in PNG."

The event at the resort had musical performances by Madang's Kanagoi band finishing the countdown to the New Year with a mini fireworks display.

"There is always hope and that is what we can all hold onto as we go towards a prosperous 2021," said Tetsuya.

National Maritime and Safety Authority, PNG Customs, representatives of Madang's LLC, Madang Timbers as well as the District Administrator.

"I would like to say that I have 2 more weeks till my people send their children back to school, I have really struggled with my people and this is a huge blow to me personally and the people of Krangket Island."

Jan Michael Lenada, a representative of WoodBank Pacific, the agents of the ship, had apologized to Rodney assuring him that immediate actions would be taken to solve the problem.

PNG Power's representative, Stanis Tibong said that technicians from Lae have already been informed and will travel to Madang to assess the damage.

Sir Peter Barter, the Managing Director of the Melanesian Tourist Services Ltd (MTS) and a former member for Madang said that there were immediate solutions

that could be taken to supply power to the people on the island.

"An immediate solution to the problem would be to install a temporary generator that will supply power to the people, but this is only temporary."

Documents containing eye witness reports as well as photos of the destroyed cables has been sent to the owners of the ship.

Jeffery Ling, a representative from Madang Timbers has guaranteed that the company will pay for the generator.

The ship will continue its journey to Bunabun and then to Oro, "till then we can all agree that the alleged companies responsible for this problem should give us a full guarantee that they will get the cable fixed," said Anthony from PNG customs.

"My people need electricity now, and it has to be given to us soon," said Rodney.

Madang Celebrates Christmas



The Christmas Pageant at the Madang Resort's Sugen Aben Park.

More than 2,000 people attended the Christmas Pageant that was sponsored by the Madang Resort and the Madang Rotary Club at Sugen Aben Park on Saturday the 19th.

The evening began with an opening speech by Henry Manago, a student from the Divine Word University and an intern for the Melanesian Tourist Services Ltd (MTS) Marketing Division.

Henry described the meaning of Christmas and also explained the annual event's change of name, from the usual Carols by Candlelight to this year's Christmas Pageant.

"Despite the global pandemic, we have made it through to the end of 2020 together - and that is something we should be grateful for."

The event saw 20 different groups from the local Madang community who performed different plays and dances.

Amongst the highlights was a puppet show by the United Church Sunday School, music by Kanagoi Band and the arrival of Santa Claus who distributed sweets to children.

The annual event hosted

by the Madang Resort and the Madang Rotary Club is free and open to everyone in the Madang community.

"The proceeds from the hot dogs and the soft drinks that were sold by the Madang Rotary club will go towards our projects," said Maureen Hill.

Mrs. Hill said that this Christmas was a time to celebrate a great year, "but we must always be willing to give and share with the people that truly need our help this Christmas."

Sir Peter Barter said that he was surprised to see so many people attend the pageant, "as it was thought that attendance would have been low due to COVID-19 restrictions."

Sir Peter took the opportunity to thank the organizers of the event, the Rotary Club, the staff from the Madang Resort, who set up the marquee, lights, giant Christmas tree and provided transport to the local villagers that attended the pageant.

"Next year, the event will be bigger and better than this year and I wish everyone a healthy, happy Christmas and a more prosperous New Guinea and New Year.

Madang Airport continues its expansion

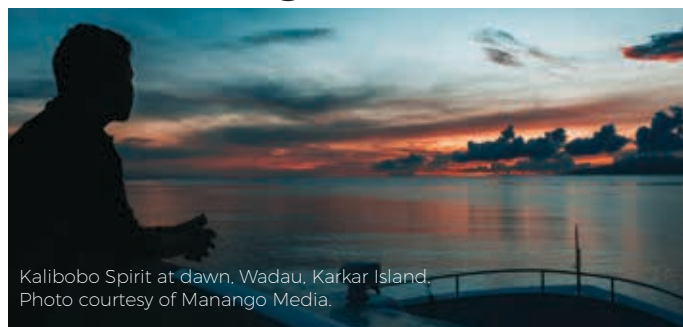


An aerial picture of the airport showing the recent upgrade. The planned airport has undergone its first phase of upgrade.

A Weekend in Madang with the Kalibobo Spirit

Departing into Madang's golden skies, the Kalibobo Spirit's engine quietly hummed as it made its way out of the Madang Resort marina. At 6am on Saturday the 9th of January, the Kalibobo Spirit departed for Karkar Island, carrying onboard several scuba divers, their dive instructor from the Niugini Dive Adventures (NDA), a few guests, the vessel's crew and the spirit of adventure.

A safety brief was given to the guests and the divers who eagerly awaited their adventure to begin. As if anticipating its passenger's eagerness, the ship carried on its journey safely past the inner islands of Madang, now towing



the Dallman Diver, the dive boat from NDA. The vessel now turning its bearing towards a distant blue-greenish mountain that seemed to be protruding out from the ocean's breadth.

The smell of breakfast gathered all the voyagers

together as the quiet sound of conversations echoed throughout the vessel's dining area. After breakfast and a few more conversations later, the island of Karkar's started to become clearer. Its trees and lush green vegetation now reflecting against the ocean's

blue abyss.

Well known for its copra production, its biofuel, friendly people, "awesome diving," added Tetsuya Nakamura, Niugini Dive Adventures' (NDA) dive instructor. The island's oval shape may seem ordinary at first, but it has a unique history that needs to be told.

In 1545 a curious Spanish explorer passed the island, Inigo Ortiz de Retes. Inigo had passed the island while taking a southern route to his final destination after his previous predecessor had failed his voyage. He became the first explorer to ever see the island. Years passed and the quiet island and its people were visited by strange 'white

man.' Willem Schouten and Jacob le Maire proudly (as if they accomplished something) called the island, High island. In 1643 Abel Tasman passed the island and the island was soon later visited by another strange 'white man,' William Dampier, this was dated to approximately 1699. The spark of ancient tourism by these strange explorers did not hinder the local islanders' lifestyle, as they still maintained a traditional subsistent farming, hunting and gathering lifestyle. Nature, however, always has the last say.

1895 recorded the island's first volcanic eruption, no casualties were recorded. During this time the natural disaster created a fertile habitat, "you can pretty much grow anything here, this island is a paradise like no other," said Brett Middleton.

Navigating the outer coral reefs, the Kalibobo Spirit found its anchorage at Kulili Estate's wharf where the guests were met by the Middleton family. Brett and brother Derek Middleton are both proud Karkar men, "our home is here on this island," said Brett. The Middletons have farmed and produced copra for many generations, a family business that has become synonymous with the island itself. "The island sustains itself; we produce our own biofuel and we create employment for our own people."

An estate that could simply captivate anyone's imagination, the Middleton's home also has a touch of history. "Well after the Japanese soldiers came here in WW2, they shortened all the table's legs, because they sit on the floor when they eat, but kindly enough they neatly stacked the offcuts in the cupboards so it was easy for my grandfather to fix the furniture again when the war ended," said Brett as he laughed.

The guests were treated by the Middleton family to a delicious lunch, an

introduction to the estate, a quick tour, a spectacular view that overlooked the pristine ocean and an insight into one of the oldest family business in Madang.

Drawing its anchor from the crystal-clear blue waters, the Kalibobo Spirit travelled to Wadau, a few minutes away from Kulili.

Villagers from Wadau all flocked to the shoreline to see the Kalibobo Spirit, a strange white vessel, quite different from the copra ships that they've grown accustomed to. While the guests cooled off in

the sea, Tetsuya and his keen divers returned back from their marine explorations. "Karkar never disappoints, so many beautiful things to see, good visibility and my scuba divers were not disappointed," said Tetsuya as he guided his clients off the Dallman Diver.

Dinner was loud and cheerful as the guests and the divers all conversed, giving tales of their fond experiences of the island. After the guests had retired into their cabins for a well-deserved rest, a commotion occurred on the shore.

As their flashlights reflected off their 'meri blouse,' and well-dressed shirts, young villagers had returned from a church's youth 'lotu.' With the obvious sight of a large vessel

laying at an area that used to be empty to them, there were greetings of goodnight and "laikim yupla, (regards to you all)."

Bagabag island lay in front of Kalibobo Spirit's heading. As Inigo Ortiz de Retes (the same Spanish explorer that saw Karkar) first sighted the island, its beaming blue seas proved that Madang didn't have any competition. The vessel anchored on the southern side of the island,

"Well after the Japanese soldiers came here in WW2, they shortened all the table's legs...but kindly enough they neatly stacked the offcuts in the cupboards."

fittingly called Christmas Bay. As the vessel came to a halt, the divers departed for their

underwater explorations, "diving here in Bagabag would be new for me, but it's always exciting to see what type of creatures we would find," said Tetsuya, as he quickly released the ropes that had successfully towed the dive boat from its previous destination. "I also hear that there are some hammerhead sharks around here, can't wait," said Tetsuya, with a slight humor in his voice.

The guests were joined by the children from the village as they all enjoyed a rewarding swim in a sea that was as clear as the sky above it. The divers later returned with stories of sharks, bright and colorful coral reefs and strange tides that carried them peacefully along the coral-laced seas. "Very satisfied, truly a unique



Divers at Karkar Island.

dive destination here in PNG," said Tetsuya.

After lunch, the engines whirred into existence, penetrating the deep blue-salted water. The children and the villagers all said their goodbyes, waving to the passengers, "they are blessed to have an island like this, this is their home and we are merely visitors, just here to share their island with them," said Joe, as he turned the vessel's bearing towards its home there were hardly any sound as the guests ate their dinner in silence. "They all have work, what can you say, great weekend and I hope they all have a great week ahead," said Joe, as he looked out with his binoculars at a blue mountain peak signifying the end of a great weekend.



Kalibobo Spirit at Christmas Bay, Bagabag Island.

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