

**Press review:  
Mining in the South Pacific**

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**Abbreviations in common use:**

BCL: Bougainville Copper Limited

LNG: Liquid Natural Gas

PIR: Pacific Islands Report

PNG: Papua New Guinea

**Websites:**

Radio New Zealand: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international>

PNG Post-Courier: <http://postcourier.com.pg/>

PNG National: <http://www.thenational.com.pg/>

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**Saonu calls for calm on Wafi-Golpu**

Post-Courier, February 26, 2021

Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu has called for calm among Members of Parliament and urged them to consult with his office before going to the media on matters regarding the Wafi-Golpu mining project. He said there is a need for all Morobe MPs to work together to further the project. Responding to calls for the recall of the provincial assembly by Bulolo MP and Deputy Prime Minister Sam Basil, Mr Saonu said he is consulting first with the people and stakeholders including landowners in the review of the Morobe Provincial Government position paper to be discussed with the National Government. "This review is being finalised now to be further discussed with the provincial executive before going to the Tutumang," he said.

"I have been briefed by the review team and I am satisfied we are on track to have our final report by the end of this month before going to PEC and the Tutumang. "Our reviews have highlighted many issues not realised in the previous position paper and initiatives I believe will be of greater

benefit to the province and the country.” Mr Saonu reminded leaders not to politicise the Wafi-Golpu issue and if there are issues, the leaders must consult with him as this project is important. “I urge our good Members of Parliament to remain calm and focus. “I will discuss with them as soon as I am satisfied with the review document for our position paper and once we are all in agreement, we will sit down with the National Government.”

### **Local says abandoned mining machinery belong in museum**

February 26, 2021, The National

MACHINERY left over from the gold rush of the 1920s and 1930s in Bulolo, Morobe, should be in a museum, a concerned citizen says. Long-time resident of Bulolo town, Aaron Akui, raised the concern saying dredges and gold mining equipment from the district’s early days were lying strewn in bushes around Wau and Bulolo and a mining museum needed to be constructed for these relics. He said the district had been the scene of one of the country’s earliest and largest gold mining operations and, thus, had historical significance. Akui said the National Museum and Art Gallery needed to take on the responsibility of setting up the museum to showcase the district and province’s historical importance in the early development of the country. He said at present the old mining relics were scattered around town and on the periphery and rusting away with overgrowth covering them.

Akui said no-one seemed to notice them or their part in the history of the town and district. “We need to preserve these as those are relics that points out PNG as one of the earliest gold rush country in the region,” he said. Akui said seeing the mining relics, including three gold dredging machines, left abandoned and ignored was disheartening. “These relics have to be kept safe for the future generations as reminders and history of mining in the country.” He said there were also pictures and other memorabilia in the district that could be put in the museum. Akui called on local, provincial and national authorities to make a submission to the Government for something to be done to preserve a piece of PNG history.

### **DSTP best option, expert says**

By GLORIA BAUAI, February 26, 2021, The National

A NATIONAL environmental and fisheries biologist is confident that deep sea tailings placement (DSTP) is the most sensible option for dump for the K14 billion Wafi-Golpu gold-copper project. Dr Figa Boga was engaged as an independent consultant by the Morobe government in 2018 to review the environmental impact study (EIS) compiled by the project developer. “After going through all the data, I firmly believe the selected option was the most sensible option in terms of risk to environment, as well as lives, and also for environmental purposes,” he said. Dr Boga has worked in mines for more than 27 years and has experience on metal toxicity issues. He dismissed the fears of metal toxicity and upwelling that may be caused by sea currents if DSTP was pursued. He explained that tailings sent under water with the absence of oxygen basically removed any reaction with air for it to bring out the toxicity in metals.

Dr Boga said the process to be used at Wafi-Golpu would not involve any cyanide or mercury as they would be shipping out only gold-copper concentrate and not producing gold bullions on site. He said the waste would be mixed with cold water extracted from the sea depths which was very salty, making the tailings heavier. “This tailings slurry will drop into the Markham Canyon at 200 metres below sea level and allowed to sink further under gravity and its own weight,” he said. He said the Markham Canyon reached the New Britain trench at about 6,000m (6km) depth. Dr Boga said this was deeper than the Northern Niugini coastal undercurrent which constantly runs above the New Britain trench at 600-800m below sea level. “I am confidence that what sinks there will not

come up,” he said. Dr Boga said the Government made the decision based on scientific and engineering evidence.

### **Landowners want DSTP**

February 26, 2021, The National

THE landowners from the special mining lease (SML) areas including the pipeline and the proposed deep sea tailing placement (DSTP) outlet area have denounced Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu’s opposition to DSTP. They disagreed with Saonu’s idea of taking the matter to court if DSTP was to be the option for the K17 billion Wafi-Golpu gold and copper project’s waste disposal plan. Over a week ago, Saonu gave a 14-day ultimatum to the Government to retract its decision. Hengambu chairman John Nema, Yanta chairman Victor Giatulu, Babuaf chairman Jack Laban, Wampar pipeline landowners association chairman Joseph Tetam and Wagang outfall landowners association chairman Gei Galang, said they were in favour of DSTP.

### **PNG offers ‘incredible’ chances**

By SHIRLEY MAULUDU, February 26, 2021, The National Business

PAPUA New Guinea has provided K92 Mining Inc an “incredible” opportunity to advance as a company, with the mineral discovery in Eastern Highlands, according to company chief executive John Lewins. Lewins said though the geography of the country was a challenge, the company saw so much opportunity as it advanced its operations in 2017. “The opportunities in PNG are way above challenges,” he said. “We’ve got mountains, we’ve got high rainfall, and a lot of other things that we deal with, but the opportunity is incredible. “We see ourselves very much a PNG company. “What we’ve done at K92 is that we’ve put together a team of people and our geology and exploration people said previous interpretation isn’t quite right and we think that there are some opportunities here,” he said. “The geologist said drill in that direction, 200 metres, and you’ll hit what we now call Kora North.

“At almost exactly 200 metres, we hit Kora, a beautiful discovery hole. That was drilled in May 2017. “In October 2017, we took a sample from that area. “This is underground. We are talking about 700m below the surface. “In October took the sample, we put it through the plant – we had 90 per cent gold, 90 per cent copper recovery. “We then had the marketing people who got us a market to sell it to in very good terms. “We committed to developing Kora as a mine. “At the end of January 2018, that is nine months after we drilled the first hole, and just four months after we took the sample, we declared commercial production. “And that was the first time Kainantu mine had ever made a profit. “And it has made a profit ever since then. “Last year we gave K25 million in corporate tax to the Government. “We’ve also grown our workforce from only 100 people from when we started to over 1,100 now.”

### **Cook Islands Opposition concerned over consultation shutout**

*A delegation consulting with the northern outer Cook Islands over seabed mining should have included Opposition MPs, according their leader, Tina Browne.*

Radio New Zealand on 25 February 2021

Browne said the Opposition should have been represented to ensure balance. The Cook Islands Government responded saying it hadn't sought to exclude the Opposition but on this trip there wasn't room. Browne said the people "need to be given the best information which covers all the bases in order to make up their minds whether to support or oppose a national project that affects every

Cook Islander." She said the government should also have included scientists, Dr Teina Ronga and Jacqui Evans, who would've given the people the other side of the story. The government said Browne would participate in upcoming seabed mining consultations in Manihiki and Rakahanga.



Polymetallic nodules Pacific ocean Photo: Velizar Gordeev. All rights reserved.



Cook Islands opposition leader, Tina Browne Photo: supplied

The Seabed Minerals Commissioner, Alex Herman, had now met with Browne and a government spokesperson said the Opposition Leader's concerns about the consultation process had been taken on board. "I believe it was a fruitful discussion, and we both agreed that we would like to see this sector developed responsibly and for the benefit of our people. Opposition Leader Browne emphasised the need for us to work together." Herman said. "This is a sentiment shared by Prime Minister Brown. We look forward to working with the Opposition towards our common goals for this sector."

### **Wafi-Golpu LOs back environment permit**

BY JERRY SEFE, Post-Courier, February 25, 2021

The Wafi-Golpu landowners have finally announced their position in support to the National Government on the Wafi-Golpu environment permit granted to mine developers. The announcement

was made on Tuesday by the five associations chairmen, Victor Geactuluc (Yanta Development Association), John Nema (Hengambu Landowner Association), Jack Raban (Babuaf Development Corporation) of the Special Mining Lease (SML) area including Joseph Tetang (Wampar Pipeline Association) and Gae Galang (Wagan Outfall Association) of the project sites. The chairmen said as elected leaders representing the SML communities of Wafi-Golpu, they want the project to move forward without further delay and are urging Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu to desist from any purported court proceedings against the State on the affairs of deep sea tailings placement (DSTP). However, according to Mr Saonu, Morobe's position still stands and he will not rush into making any decision that might cost the lives of the people.

"I will do what is right, just and fair for everyone," said Mr Saonu. An independent body that has been doing a monitoring and evaluation process on the progress of Wafi-Golpu project for the last four years led by Shalom Amua said that landowners must not rush into making early decisions. The leaders argued that courts had their own timing and process that will cost the people of Morobe and the provincial government millions of kina, therefore the governor must consider legal action as the last resort. They said the mining forum is the right place to discuss and settle issues over Wafi-Golpu project because it legally allows every genuine stakeholder to respond on issues affecting them. Mr Nema, in an open dialogue during the announcement, said so far he has lost more than 20 of his community members to frequent natural disasters and lack of basic health services in his area. "I am against the move by our governor to register another court proceeding against the National Government while my people are suffering and dying without seeing any real developments or benefiting from their land," he said.

Mr Geactuluc also said they do not support the governor's intention on taking the matter to court over the State granting environment permit to the developers (Newcrest and Harmony) as he knowingly accepted the approval 'in principle' with the minister. "We urge the good governor to refrain from wasting his time with his consultants and advisers but instead commit his time and resource to mobilise the SML, Pipeline and Outfall landowners through their associations in preparation for the upcoming Wafi Project MoA," he said. Mr Tetang also said they urge the governor to also talk to the State on how he intends to recognise the Huon Gulf coastal communities benefit sharing instead of fighting a losing arrangement to prevent DSTP. Mr Tetang said the company has already carried out research and survey in 45 potential sites inland from the Markham Gap to Huon Gulf and Bulolo but was unable to find a safe location because of high risks involved in setting up a Terrestrial Storage Facility. "That is why the developer has chosen DSTP because it is much safer and could not harm the marine resources or the coastal communities based on the research and studies conducted.

### **Church rep: Give us research data on mine disposal plan**

BY JANET KARI, Post-Courier, February 24, 2021

Church representatives in Morobe Province are raising concerns for government bodies to provide factual information based on research regarding waste disposal methods to be used by the Wafi-Golpu mine. Many have said with the controversy in the proposed waste disposal by the mine developer from Morobe provincial government and people in the province, factual information is vital for everyone that will be impacted by the project. They raised these concerns following a meeting with Wafi-Golpu Joint Venture community affairs team in Lae on Monday. The meeting was for WGJV, representatives of Mineral Resource Authority and an independent consultant to discuss with Morobe Council of Churches on updates of the project and environment permit process. "This is the second time the team did a presentation to us (churches) but this is the first time I got involved with a researched presentation for the mine to happen," chairman of Lae Ministers Fraternity Pastor Pinarua Sialis said. "The presentation was very good and very clear for the village people as

well as for us who are non-scientists to understand. When we are not educated on a subject or we don't understand things we will say things that are not right due to misunderstanding.”

He said it is important for all stakeholders including developer, provincial government and others to be made aware of factual information that must be based on research and data collection to understand the issues surrounding the proposed waste disposal method. Another representative from PNG Evangelical Lutheran Church and a woman representative said while the presentation from the developer was made, the provincial government and government departments must also present their findings. “The developer has made it clear, but how will the national and provincial governments including government departments assure us of the impacts if we allow the proposed waste disposal by the mine developer or alternate proposed by the provincial government. These things must be made known,” she said. Many that participated shared similar sentiments saying there is a grave need for the provincial government to also provide information on the impacts of the alternatives proposed, both on the environment and the people.

### **Environment monitoring plan needed for manufacturers**

By GLORIA BAUAI, February 24, 2021 The National

MOROBE needs an environmental management monitoring plan for manufacturing industries and other activity taking place in the province, an independent consultant says. Scientist Dr Figa Boga said this was crucial for the industrial province, and especially with the foresight of an industry boom in the near future. Dr Boga was engaged by the Morobe government in 2018 to review the Wafi-Golpu Joint Venture's (WGJV) environmental impact study (EIS) for its K14 billion gold-copper project. He said unfortunately, WGJV's EIS data highlighted a pre-existing contaminated environment along the Huon Gulf. “There's a lot of industries who are flushing waste into the Huon Gulf,” he said. “You have agricultural activities happening upstream from major plantations and mercury being used by alluvial miners.

“So, apart from being contaminated with human waste, there's high levels of arsenic, mercury, copper, chromium and nickel that's well established in the sediments.” Dr Boga said, in his review, he found that these metals were present in fish liver and tissues in high concentrations but not dangerous levels. He said among his recommendations put forward to the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (Cepa) and the provincial government, was for Morobe to have an environmental management monitoring plan. “Because if and when Wafi-Golpu gets its mining licence, there will be an industry boom in Morobe,” he said. “How do they manage their waste and how will the provincial government hold them accountable?”

### **Government signs K3.3bil power deal**

By HELEN TARAWA, February 24, 2021, The National Main Stories

A K3.3 BILLION Ramu 2 hydro-power project was signed yesterday by the Government and Shenzhen Energy of China. State Enterprise Minister William Duma said the conditional power purchase agreement with PNG Power had been signed but there were other financing arrangements that the project consortium needed to do with their own parties before the commencement. “The first hurdle has been dealt with now with the signing today. “As soon as they organise their financing, we will start,” he said. “We are looking at initial investment of K200 million for the early work programme – building roads, setting up camp – an immediate capital investment of money into our country.” Duma said Morobe and Eastern Highlands would each own 10 per cent equity in the project.

Landowners from both provinces will each have 10 per cent shares while the State will have 60 per cent. “We are giving equity to the two impacted provincial governments and landowners plus the project will be paying lease of K350,000 every year,” he said. “On top of that, the landowners will receive an upfront payment of K10mil for their landowner companies.” Duma said the National Executive Council had picked the consortium led by Shenzhen Energy after a robust bidding process managed by the Kumul Consolidated Holdings. The Ramu 2 hydro-power project will provide jobs and spin-off benefits to the landowners and businesses. The project will supply electricity to the Wafi-Golpu mine and possibly the Ramu Nico project in Madang too. “This project might even outlive the Wafi-Golpu mine,” Duma said.

### **Cook Islanders told seabed mining could be years away**

Radio New Zealand on 23 February 2021

Cook Islanders are being told that any decision to mine billions of tonnes of rare earth minerals is still years away. The sea floor surrounding the northern Cooks is seen as a potential resource to help supply the electric battery industry. Cook Island Prime Minister Mark Brown led the mission to the Pa Enea outer islands along with Seabed Mineral Authority (SBM) and Marae Moana representation. The delegation aimed to persuade people living on Palmerston, Nassau and Pukapuka atolls of the value of the polymetallic nodules on their seabed floors. Some estimates put volumes at 12 billion tonnes.

Brown told locals that licensed exploration under way right now was just about data collection. He said a decision on commercial harvesting was some years away. Despite [ocean scientists saying accurate data](#) on the impact of mining is not yet available, SBM Commissioner Alex Herman told students on Palmerston "that the types of impacts were fairly well known" and that prospectors would need to prove their ability to prevent any harmful impacts. Praising student interest in the seabed, she referred to it as a "national resource" which is in contrast to the Marae Moana Act 2017 which aims to protect and conserve the "ecological, biodiversity and heritage values of the Cook Islands marine environment."



Minerals on the sea bed Photo: Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority

## **Churches' council urges provincial govt to discuss K14bil project**

By GLORIA BAUAI, February 23, 2021 The National

THE Morobe council of churches has urged the provincial government to have dialogue with developer and stakeholders of the K14 billion Wafi-Golpu gold and copper project. This consensus was reached following an information session hosted by the Wafi-Golpu Joint Venture, on the project's environmental permit. The session was for the Morobe council of churches, including Evangelical Lutheran church and the Lae ministers fraternity comprising Evangelical, Apostolic and Pentecostal independent churches. The council highlighted making decisions based on the science behind the project and the environmental permit conditions and processes which would lead to the granting of the special mining lease Pr Pinaría Sialis, chairman of Lae ministers fraternity, said this was the first time they (the church body) had been given a detailed scientific explanation on the background of a project. He said the presentation was clear "even for a non-scientist like me to understand things such as deep sea tailing placement". "Without understanding, there's fear and we say things that are not right or we go on assuming," he said. Pr Sialis called for the Morobe government to make the effort to listen on this information session. There was also a united call for the Morobe government to provide scientific research to counter Wafi-Golpu Joint Venture's processes and methods. Mary Taukulu, with the ELCPNG, said the provincial government needed to convince the people with evidence and research to back its claim that DSTP posed a significant threat to the province.

## **Basil: Call assembly meeting over Wafi-Golpu**

BY MELISHA YAFOI, Post-Courier, February 22, 2021

Deputy Prime Minister and Bulolo MP Sam Basil is calling on Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu to hold a meeting for a week-long debate on issues surrounding the Wafi-Golpu mining project. He told the Post-Courier that the provincial assembly needs to sit from a Tuesday to Friday for two weeks to debate provincial issues including business, transportation and Wafi-Golpu. He said what should have happened was for the governor to call an assembly meeting and invite visitors onto the floor as per the standing orders to debate their statements or standing on the proposed Wafi-Golpu mining project. "Invite the landowners of Hengabu, Yanta and Babuaf and then the pipeline landowners and the deep sea tailings landowners and other affected community members and bring them into the assembly meeting, deliver their statement, walk out we close the Tutumang door and we debate," he said.

Mr Basil said both the upstream tailings and deep sea tailings are not good but they have to choose a better one by having a debate at the provincial assembly to decide. He said the meeting will enable all parties to look at experiences of operating mines in the country and how they have disposed tailings. "The other thing is that if the Governor wants to take the State to court he must get the clearance from the Attorney-General. He didn't get the clearance on the first case he took, which means that the case he took at the first place was against the MoU that was signed. We've wasted K14 million, during the trial. I believe the Governor didn't get the approval from the Attorney-General so he is liable to pay for it and not the provincial government," he said. Mr Basil said with the upcoming case, if he doesn't get the clearance, who will pay for the bill, hence a Tutumang needs to be called. "We haven't exhausted all avenues yet, the nine members of Morobe must speak on the floor that we are elected on."



## **Porgera mine closure affecting people: Pakea**

By ELIAS LARI, February 22, 2021, The National

HUNDREDS of people from Porgera in Enga are badly affected by the closure of the mine there and want the Government to address it urgently, president of the Porgera Chamber of Commerce and Industry Nickson Pakea says. He said negotiations between the Government and the developer (Barrick Niugini Ltd) concerning the reopening of the mine should consider the stress and pressure the people were facing. Pakea said the mine was closed on April 20, last year, over rejection of renewing the mining lease by the state. He said 11 months of the mine closure and economic impasses had hit the local economy and simple dependents on the mine hard. "Many contractors lost their business," Pakea said. "Employees were terminated and are on the streets. Banks have retained machines and trucks purchased on loan and others sold their business assets." "Since the mine was closed, PMV buses reduced their normal operation because the movement of the people have come to a standstill and owners are finding it hard to repay the loans. "Most properties are on the list for the banks to retrieve and sell." Pakea said.

## **Mine plans to move from ore to sulphide**

February 22, 2021, The National Business

ST Barbara Ltd's Simberi operations in New Ireland, which has been producing gold since 2009, is planning to transition from mining oxide ore to sulphide. According to the company, its social and environmental impact studies (SEIS) is currently being completed for submission to the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (Cepa) and Mineral Resources Authority (MRA) in March. Sulphide mining is expected to extend mine life by another 10 years at least and produce more benefits for stakeholders. St Barbara managing director and chief executive Craig Jetson said: "We are at an important stage of operations at Simberi, as we continue to productively mine the oxide deposit and plan for a bright future via the Simberi sulphide project." Jetson said new general manager Iso Ealedona would contribute to this transition.

"Iso will capably lead us through this transition as we support our Simberi community, contribute to New Ireland and deliver on our commitments to PNG." Meanwhile, according to the company, since 2009, Simberi mine has delivered K84.3 million in royalties, paid an annual 0.5 per cent production levy and contributed over K97.4 million in contracts to landowner businesses. "In 2020, the company paid over K28 million in income tax," according to St Barbara. "Other community benefits delivered since 2012, when St Barbara acquired the mine, amount to over K119 million. "They include health and education infrastructure development, roads and bridges maintenance, cocoa farming, mariculture projects, education scholarships and employment and training."

## **Group supports issue of permit**

February 22, 2021 The National Business

A GROUP of landowners in the K18.4 billion Wafi-Golpu project agree with granting of the environment permit and the use of deep sea tailings placement. Chairman Bill Itamar, of the Babwa and Saab land group of the Magense land special mining lease 10, where the proposed project sits, said they supported the Government's decisions. "We supported the Government in the signing of the environment permit," he said. "We are with the Government and the State negotiating team and we encourage all the landowners to leave aside their differences and work together to achieve maximum benefits for our people of Wampar, Mumeng LLG, Huon Gulf and Morobe." "We also support deep sea tailings placement (DSTP) because our area is according to studies waterlogged and if the rainfall increases, it will not support the waste from Wafi-Golpu.

“Wafi-Golpu is bigger than 10 mines in PNG put together and if the waste is placed on a mountain, you are sitting on a time bomb because at any time it will explode. “Wampar and Watut and Huon Gulf will be destroyed. “That’s why we are not supporting the provincial government because it is our land.” The provincial government is opposing the Government’s decisions to issue the permit and confirm the use of the DSTP. But Itamar suggested that the mine waste be disposed of through DSTP for another 1,000 metres below sea level to avoid it being carried by the current towards Salamaua and Finschhafen. The environmental permit was granted last month. The construction alone is expected to cost K17.26 million to be undertaken by developers Harmony Gold Mining Company Ltd and Newcrest Mining Ltd.

### **Mine factions back together**

By BOURA GORUKILA, February 19, 2021, The National

TWO landowner factions of the Porgera mine re-united yesterday and are appealing to the Government, former mine operator Barrick Niugini Ltd, Kumul Mineral Holdings Ltd and stakeholders to re-open the mine as soon as possible. The factions named Barrick Out and Barrick Stay headed by brothers Nixon and Maso Mangape reconciled and re-united because they had suffered enough since the mine shut down 18 months ago. Chief landowner and former MP for Lagaip-Porgera Nixon Mangape, who led 23 landowners to sign the mine agreement in 1989, said the two factions united as requested by the Government and were appealing to it to conclude negotiations with Barrick and reopen the mine. “There are no more two factions, we have united as one to work with the Government and the operator,” he said. “Our people, 40,000-plus, are suffering in Porgera, parents cannot afford to pay school fees this year because there is no cash flow after the mine had shut down.

“The Prime Minister James Marape always talks about ‘take back PNG’. “You should start with Porgera. “If you don’t open the mine by next Monday, we ourselves (landowners) will mine the gold or look for other investor who might have interest in the mine.” Maso Mangape, chairman of the Porgera Landowners’ Association (PLOA) negotiation committee, shared the opinion. Enga deputy governor and Porgera local level government president Leo Kuala flew in from Porgera to witness the re-union. He joined the landowners to call on the Government and operators (former and current) to re-open the mine. “The people of Porgera have suffered enough and there’s no reason why the mine won’t open,” he said.

Deputy chairman of PLOA, who is also a chief landowner, Dickson Pundi, said they would represent themselves as landowners in the negotiations and framework as they had enough landowners to represent themselves. “If there’s a negotiation, we have to be present because we have all united as one,” he said “Adding to that, any benefit that comes, we have our very own people here to take care of them. “We have enough managers to manage funds, unlike in the previous years where the state had their say as well as the provincial government. “Finish the framework and go open the mine.” The Porgera mine has operated for the last 30 years until its shut down last year because its licence had expired. The mine was refused renewal of its licence because of the environmental damage it had caused.

### **Miner’s tax credit scheme focuses on community development**

February 18, 2021, The National Business

THE approval of K92 Mining’s participation in the tax credit scheme will its scope to deliver development in the community, chief executive and director John Lewins says. Lewins told *The National* that the company had delivered community development initiatives outside of the tax credit scheme.

The Government has just approved its participation which Prime Minister James Marape announced in Kainantu last Friday. “The approval of K92’s participation in the tax credit scheme significantly enhances the scope of community development initiatives which the company can support by partnering with the Government to deliver community infrastructure,” Lewins said. “K92 will still continue with its numerous community initiatives outside of the tax credit scheme with a focus on job creation, expanding business opportunities, education and training, smaller infrastructure projects focused on upgrading schools, water supplies, clinics and the like.” Lewins said the company would be investing on sealing roads, schools, hospitals and power infrastructure. Other projects for Kainantu include:

- THE market, which K92 will support with a K1 million donation;
- ESTABLISHMENT of a Mineral Resource Authority (MRA) regional office in Kainantu to support the communities impacted by the mine and support initiatives such as small-scale alluvial mining;
- SEALING of roads in and around Kainantu;
- RAMU 2 Hydro project – potentially very important for not only the community in making grid power available but also for K92 as it is looking at its stage 3 expansion which will increase production to 350,000 ozs per annum; and,
- TIN-KRUFU High School – K92 is involved in a number of initiatives such as the upgrading of community schools, assistance in school fees and scholarships for tertiary education for children in impacted communities.

### **Australian explorer prepares for Misima mine**

February 18, 2021, The National Business

AUSTRALIAN explorer Kingston Resources (KSN) has strengthened its on-the-ground presence in Papua New Guinea in preparation for permitting and development of its flagship Misima gold project. The company has appointed Geoff Callister to expand its in-country management team as the project progresses through mining studies and regulatory approvals. Callister will lead the preparation of an environmental impact statement and mining lease application and help develop and implement Kingston’s social and community programmes at Misima. These programmes included engagement with local communities, landowners and government authorities and had been considered “critically important” to the project’s success. Kingston managing director Andrew Corbett said Callister’s role would help accelerate Misima through to the next stage of development. “Callister brings a set of vital skills to the Kingston team backed by extensive professional experience working at Misima Island and more broadly within Papua New Guinea,” he said.

“He has worked on landmark projects in Papua New Guinea and we are very much looking forward to welcoming him as we move to the next exciting stage at Misima.” Last November, Kingston delivered the Misima pre-feasibility study which forecast gold production of approximately 130,000oz per year at an all-in cost of AU\$1,159 (K3,119.21) per ounce over an initial 17-year mine life. The study contained a projected life-of-mine revenue of almost AU\$5 billion (K13.45bil), free cashflow of AU\$1.5 billion (K4bil), a pre-tax net present value (NPV) of AU\$822 million (K2.2bil) and an internal rate of return (IRR) of 33 per cent based on a conservative gold price of US\$1,600 (K4,306.07) per ounce. At a gold price of US\$1,900/oz (K5,113.46/oz), the project could expect to deliver a NPV of AU\$1.28 billion (K3.4bil) and an IRR of 48 per cent. Kingston currently has two diamond drill rigs conducting extensional and in-fill drilling within the existing Misima resource area which comprises 3.6Moz gold. The company is also advancing environmental and approvals programme in preparation for commencement of definitive feasibility study work later this year.

## **Submission for Sinivit clean-up being prepared**

By SHIRLEY MAULUDU, February 18, 2021, The National Business

A SUBMISSION to Cabinet is being prepared for funding to clean up the abandoned Sinivit gold mine in East New Britain, according Environment, Conservation and Climate Change Minister Wera Mori. He told The National that the cost of the clean-up would be about K9 million. “We need to clean up the abandoned mine as there is a large amount of toxic waste still sitting there,” he said. The New Guinea Gold Limited abandoned the gold project in September 2014 after blaming the Government and the Mineral Resources Authority “for not quickly renewing the mining lease”. The Conservation, Environment and Protection Authority (Cepa) said the State was liable for any environment damage on the Sinivit gold mine site because the mining lease had been cancelled. The funding will be used for the:

- SAMPLING of water, soil, biota and river sedimentation on the mine site and downstream Warangoi catchment;
- DETOXIFICATION of chemical contaminations and the clean-up of mine debris on site;
- REHABILITATION of the site; and,
- COMPILATION of environment impact assessment report.

Mori had earlier said a company would be engaged to clean-up by removing heap leach systems and non-renewable vats on site, and a clean-up and removal of chemicals. Landowner issues, outstanding royalties and compensation for environment damage are to be negotiated and settled with State agencies according to regulations. The company started gold and silver production in August 2007 and stopped production at the end of June 2012.

## **Porgera people feeling pinch of mine closure, says leader**

By DALE LUMA, February 17, 2021 The National Business

THE people of Porgera in Enga are feeling the pinch of the closure of the Porgera gold mine, says acting district administrator Jerry Mapu. “We are feeling a lot of effects such as power outages, deteriorating roads, businesses shutting down and many schools and aid posts closed,” he said. Mapu said Paiela-Hewa local level government had all but closed down with an aid post the only service still open. “Public servants do not want to come and work here,” he said. “We are the only ones here working.” Mapu said in terms of the mine, all stakeholders needed to learn from their mistakes. “The Government, company and landowners must come to a round table discussion to discuss some way forward for the future of Porgera,” he said. “Otherwise, we don’t have a future. “We are suffering. “The bulk of the population are suffering.” Porgera has an estimated population of 76,000.

According to the district administration, the district directly and indirectly benefits from the mine. It said the impact of the closure on top of the Covid-19 had doubled the impact on the people. “The bad road conditions from Wabag to Porgera has also made it difficult for businesses and trucks to bring in services such as fuel and others,” Mapu said. “It is also hard to travel, how can teachers, doctors and workers get here? “It’s important that the Government gives priority to Porgera for the maintenance of the road.” Another key issue highlighted was school fees. The district administration said since the mine had stopped operating, SML (special mining lease) landowners and beneficiaries of the mine’s SML trust fund and the surrounding communities engaged with the mine had lost their means of revenue to pay for their children’s school fees among other things. He said the Government had to make a decision quickly on the mine so that the district could get back to how it was in the past.

## **Consensus vital for Wafi-Golpu**

Post-Courier, February 17, 2021

There must be a mutual understanding between all stakeholders including the national and provincial governments, mine developer and landowners before the commencement of the Wafi-Golpu mine project, says Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu. Mr Saonu said this following a public forum on deep sea tailings (DSTP) in Lae last week. He said the stance of many people in Morobe is allowing for the multi-million Kina mine to commence while saying no to the waste method proposed (DSTP) by the developer, and for other alternatives to be sourced and this stance continues with the provincial government's support. "As a famous American quotes, government of the people, for the people and by the people...and this concept must be applied in every government (democratic). The rules and laws must be followed if rules are followed then for who. If the system is to help the people and if it does not work then the people will make noise and we have to fix it," Mr Saonu said. "The public have raised concerns, we have conducted several consultative meeting here and Port Moresby," he said. Mr Saonu said he wanted all parties to come together for a closure but this has not eventuated. "Since the issue of DSTP, the developer has not responded to the Morobe provincial government, they must sit and discuss their position," Mr Saonu said. When the matter is brought to court (if and when the ultimatum to Prime Minister on Wafi-Golpu is not met) it would cause another long delay into the mine. Mr Saonu said it is important that the people concerned are respected.

## **DSTP best method, says Mori**

By SHIRLEY MAULUDU, February 17, 2021, The National Business

ENVIRONMENT, Conservation and Climate Change Minister Wera Mori says the Government has not breached any laws in granting an environmental permit for the Wafi-Golpu copper/gold project in Morobe. He maintained that the deep-sea tailings placement (DSTP) was the best possible method for tailings disposal for the K18.4 billion project. Mori made the comments after the Morobe government indicated that it would take legal action against the Government over the issuance of the permit to project operator, Wafi-Golpu joint venture (WGJV) recently. "We have not breached any laws in granting the permit," Mori told The National yesterday. "Mining is all about science. "There was paramount mining safety practice considered before the permit was granted. A huge amount of mine waste can't be stored in a tailings dam.

"It's a time bomb itself. "Basamuk, Simberi and Lihir all use DSTP. "The incident at Basamuk was a result of a systems failure, it was not related to DSTP." Last week, the Morobe government said it would give the State two weeks to withdraw the environmental permit granted for the project. It wanted an alternative to DSTP found. Governor Ginson Saonu clarified Morobe's position during a public forum in Lae attended by landowners recently. Saonu said if nothing positive was forthcoming from the Government, the province would take its grievances to court. He accused the Government of "failing the people of Morobe" when it granted the environmental permit to the project developers last month. He said the province had submitted its proposals during meetings in Port Moresby and Lae but did not receive any response. "The future of Morobe is in Wafi-Golpu so the State must do the right thing," he said. "There must be proper people-leader interaction for meaningful participation between resource owners, the Government and all interested parties."

## **Alluvial mining threatens environment**

BY PETERSON TSERAHA, Post-Courier, February 16, 2021

Alluvial mining on Bougainville is now a major threat to the environment since it is now a popular way of earning an income. These new alluvial mining sites have been recently discovered in Torokina and Keriaka in the west coast of Bougainville, Sisivi up in the mountains of Wakunai district, Paruparu in the Eivo/Torau constituency, Panguna and now up in Kongara and Tavatava in the Kokoda constituency. Reports reaching the Post-Courier in Arawa say that the alluvial miners have money as their first priority and have forgotten about the environment in general. Concerned Bougainvillean and also Party president of the United Bougainville Front (UBF) Gerald Turumanu, on behalf of Bougainvilleans, told the Post-Courier that this has become a very dangerous trend and needs to be regulated or stopped.

“With the gold price soaring, buyers are buying at around K150.00 per gram for smelted and assayed gold and this has attracted a lot of people into alluvial mining, which we don’t know whether it is regulated,” Mr Turumanu said. “Alluvial mining is being allowed by the Bougainville government but the side effect is devastating now when chemicals are also being used.” He said the main thing is that in the past people blamed BCL for damaging the environment and now Bougainvilleans themselves are spoiling the environment. “This is bad foundation, especially when we are heading for independence, we fought the crisis because of the environment and resources being exploited by foreigners, now we are doing it ourselves and this must stop,” Mr Turumanu said.

## **More research needed on deep sea mining - experts**

*Ocean scientists say the importance of providing Pacific governments with accurate data about the potential impacts of deep sea mining cannot be underestimated.*

Johnny Blades, RNZ Pacific Journalist, Radio New Zealand on 15 February 2021

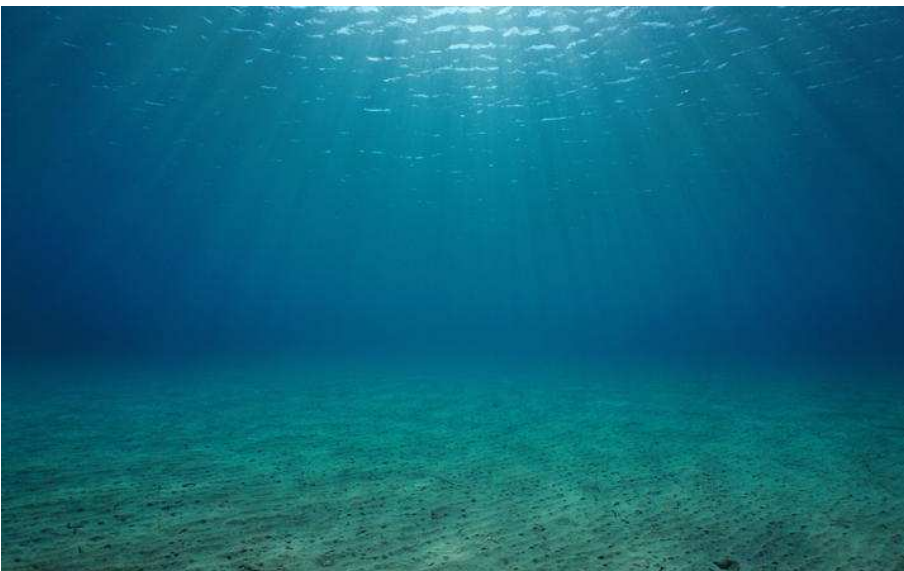


Photo: 123RF

There's growing interest from mining companies in [polymetallic nodules on the seabed of the Pacific Ocean](#). A number of Pacific Island governments are backing exploration efforts by these companies. University of Hawaii Department of Oceanography professor Jeffrey Drazen is among scientists working in this area in the Pacific. While there is still much to be learnt he said the damage risks were high for such a slow-evolving ecosystem as the ocean floor. "If you drive a vehicle across a lawn and it's a little bit wet, you get tyre tracks on the lawn, and it's unsightly, and we don't

like them. But they typically are gone in a few weeks or a month. If you drive a vehicle across the deep sea floor, those tyre marks are there for decades. Decades upon decades. They don't go away." University of California ocean science professor and Benioff Ocean Initiative director Douglas McCauley said it was important that the whole community was informed.

"Hard to see a brand new industry with such potentially revolutionary impacts or potentially significant impacts on ocean health happening in a space that is so little studied, as of yet." Professor McCauley identified three main areas of potential impacts from potential mining: on fisheries, biodiversity and also climate change. "So a lot of the material that's stored in the deep ocean where (they're) proposing to mine is ancient carbon. It's locked up in these sort of carbon vaults. That is where we want it, safely stored away from circulation in our global system. "Cook Islands, Nauru, Kiribati, Tonga, are all very interested and bullish on mining. On the other hand you have countries like Fiji, PNG, Vanuatu that are saying we just don't have enough science right now to make informed decisions about going forward with ocean mining, therefore we're going to pause."

### **Money not an issue for legal action: Saonu**

February 12, 2021, The National

MOROBE Governor Ginson Saonu says money should be the least of their worries in taking the Government and the developers of the Wafi-Golpu project to court. Saonu, on behalf of the Morobe government, had previously taken the Government and developers Newcrest and Harmony to court claiming that the 2018 memorandum of understanding was signed without proper consultation with, and input from, the provincial government and other stakeholders. "We took it to court and the court ruling was unclear but we know that we won it," he said. He said the K14 million used in the first court case was granted in two parts: K2 million each for the Huon Gulf and Mumeng landowners given by the Prime Minister James Marape to organise themselves and K10 million as legal fees. He told a public forum on Wednesday that "you have given me the mandate to fight so don't be worried about a few millions. Be worried about your future". Landowners of Babuaf and Orof are willing to allocate land for a tailings dam for the Wafi-Golpu project. Mumeng local level government president Amos Kekeng tabled a submission on it at the public forum on Wednesday.

### **Wafi-Golpu project not a political competition: Governor**

February 12, 2021, The National

Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu says the Wafi-Golpu mining project should not be used as a political competition to decide a winner. He also told a public forum on Wednesday in Morobe that he had no "personal agenda" in the project. "I don't have any personal, business, political or family interest in this project," he said. "I am not representing any specific interest group but the province as a whole – the nine districts and 33 local level governments. "Morobe people have spoken: Yes to the Wafi-Golpu mine, no to DSTP (deep sea tailings placement). That's the only agenda I'm pushing here." Former Huon Gulf MP Tukape Masani said the granting of an environment permit to the developer despite the people's request for more time to discuss the waste disposal method was "wrong." Masani said Saonu had the mandate to summon the nine MPs of Morobe to clarify their positions on the DSTP. Saonu said it should not be made a political issue or a Pangu Pati issue. "This is about the benefit of our environment and the future of our children," he said.

## Landowners urge Govt to reconsider waste disposal method

By JIMMY KALEBE, February 11, 2021 The National



A GROUP of people in Morobe, opposed to the use of the deep sea tailing placement (DSTP) system of waste disposal in the Wafi-Golpu copper and gold project, wants the Government to listen to them. The Government recently granted an environment permit to the two partners of the project to move forward work on the mine. The DSTP system will be used. The landowners at a forum yesterday called on the Government to reconsider its decision as they feared the DSTP system would pollute the marine ecosystems they depended on for food. They do not want the waste disposal system and called on the Government to include them in all decision-making on the project. They told Governor Ginson Saonu that they wanted the project to proceed but to use an alternative waste disposal system. Mumeng local level government president Amos Kekeng said the people had identified two areas for waste management and a dry tailing dam. “We want the project to go ahead. “Since DSTP is (being opposed), we provide the alternative and that is for waste disposal on the ground,” Kekeng said.

## Oil Search happy with progress of K41bil project

February 11, 2021, The National

Oil Search Ltd has welcomed the progress made in moving forward the US\$12 billion (K41.38 billion) Papua LNG project. Total, the operator of the project, and joint venture partners ExxonMobil and Oil Search signed a fiscal stability agreement with the Government on Tuesday. The agreement is seen as the final step envisioned under the Papua LNG gas agreement to guarantee the project fiscal stability. Amendments to relevant legislations were passed by Parliament last November. Oil Search managing director Dr Keiran Wulff said: “We are pleased to see further progress achieved on the Papua LNG. “This milestone highlights the commitment from the Government towards Papua LNG and is a significant step in de-risking the project.

“It also demonstrates increasing alignment between the Government and the joint venture partners. “We look forward to progressing the Papua LNG and announcing further milestones consistent with our strategic review announced last November.” Total managing director Jean-Marc Noiray said they were keen on embarking on the “whole stabilisation of the project”. “The Feed (front end engineering design) itself will last between 15 and 18 months, from the moment we reach the final investment decision,” he said. “And from final investment decision to first gas, we have about four



years of construction. “It’s a long journey before we get to the first gas, and the first revenues for the developers and the country.”

### **K41bil project on course**

By GYNNIE KERO and SHIRLEY MAULUDU, February 10, 2021, The National



Governor-General Sir Bob Dadae witnessing the signing of the fiscal stability agreement for the Papua LNG project at Government House in Port Moresby yesterday. – Nationalpic by KENNEDY BANI

THE US\$12 billion (K41.38 bil) Papua LNG project took a giant step towards the construction phase with the signing of the fiscal stability agreement in Port Moresby yesterday. The next phase is the front end engineering design (FEED) phase which takes between 16 to 18 months, followed by final investment decision. Then it will take another four years for the construction phase. Managing director Jean-Marc Noiray of the French operator Total E&P PNG Ltd said the economic benefits from the projects would be realised after the construction phase. The signing of the project’s fiscal stability agreement at Government House was attended by officials from the Government, Total and venture partners Oil Search and Exxonmobil. Noiray said they needed to embark on the whole stabilisation of the project called pre-FEED (front end engineering design). Petroleum and Energy Department secretary David Manau explained that the fiscal stability agreement signed yesterday gave full effect to the Papua LNG gas agreement signed in April 2019.

“The agreement (signed yesterday) gives a complete sense of financial stability for all partners including the state,” he said. “After this, you have a gas agreement that is fully implementable.” He said the next stage was FEED. “After that they move into final investment decision (FID). That’s when a Petroleum Development Licence (PDL) will be granted so that they can produce,” he said. “When they make the FID, that’s when Kumul (Kumul Petroleum Holdings Ltd) comes in to take the State’s equity of 20.5 per cent.” Prime Minister James Marape yesterday said the signed agreement demonstrated that the Government would honour agreements “which in the long run provides comfort to long-term investors”. “It demonstrates PNG’s commitment to this Papua LNG Project and gives comfort and encouragement to the developers to progress the project. “It is important to note that Total and Kumul Petroleum Holdings Ltd will jointly market their share of Papua LNG Project’s gas and condensate and the joint marketing team will be remobilised soon.” Marape also said the application for the second extension of the PRL15 was going through the process. Petroleum Minister Kerenga Kua will deal with it appropriately.

## **Long journey for Papua LNG**

By GYNNIE KERO and SHIRLEY MAULUDU, February 10, 2021, The National

THE front-end-engineering-design (FEED) stage of the US\$12 billion (K41.28bil) Papua LNG project will take about two years, and another four years for the actual construction, according to the operator Total E&P PNG Ltd. Managing director Jean-Marc Noiray said the economic benefits of the projects would be realised after the construction phase. He made the comments following signing of the project's fiscal stability agreement in Port Moresby yesterday. "We need to embark on the whole stabilisation of the project which we call the pre-FEED. We are working hard on that," Noiray said. "The FEED itself will last between 15 and 18 months, from the moment we reach the final investment decision. "And from final investment decision to first gas, we have about four years of construction. "It's a long journey before we get to the first gas and the first revenues for the developers and the country.

"The project is a long journey. "It was a milestone as we achieved solid steps along the way. "By signing the stability agreement today (yesterday), we are building solid foundation and also a confirmation that we can now go ahead." Meanwhile, Petroleum Minister Kerenga Kua assured landowners of Gulf and Central that they would get their fair share of benefits from the project. "I want to assure everybody that this process is at an advanced stage," Kua said. "Landowner identification has been substantially completed. However the project developer cannot bring it to my level at the department for the final vetting partly because there is an injunction sitting there somewhere, stopping the company Total from presenting their studies to me. "Now that we have achieved this, we will now put our focus back to the National Court proceedings. "I want to assure the landowners in Gulf and Central that we will do everything possible to hear them out and make sure that the processes are fast-tracked."

## **Kua: Papua LNG, P'nyang will develop as separate projects**

February 10, 2021, The National

PETROLEUM Minister Kerenga Kua says the Papua LNG project and P'nyang gas project will be developed as separate projects. He made the comments following the signing of the fiscal stability agreement for the Papua LNG project yesterday in Port Moresby. "The Papua LNG project agreement was signed in April 2019. It's now 22 months since that agreement was signed," Kua said. "One will only be wondering why such an incubation period when we should be moving into the various stages that you go through to bring the project into reality. "The reason was that there was an opportunity to join the potential project in P'nyang with the signed Papua LNG, combine them and do them together as a joint project. So every opportunity had to be given to the development partners to explore that option. (But) after 22 months, it was felt that we should delink the two projects. "Papua, because it is a fully executed agreement, is capable of proceeding as a stand-alone project, and P'nyang can follow at its own pace after this event."

## **PNG's second major LNG gas project finally approved**

*A major Liquefied Natural Gas project has been given the greenlight to proceed in Papua New Guinea.* Radio New Zealand on 10 February 2021

After twenty-two months delay, PNG's government has signed the Agreement for the Papua LNG Project with French company Total and partners ExxonMobil and Oil Search. The project, based on the Elk / Antelope gas fields in Gulf Province, is estimated to be worth \$US12-billion. After an initial Memorandum of Understanding in early 2019, the project was held up by landowner issues and

a change in government leadership in this sector. Petroleum Minister Kerenga Kua said the long incubation period was also about exploring whether this project could link up with fledgling P'nyang project in Western Province. "After 22 months it was felt that we should de-link the two projects," Kua told media at the event. "Papua LNG, because it's a fully executed agreement, is capable at proceeding as a stand-alone project. And P'nyang can follow its own pace after this event." An earlier venture, the LNG Project led by Exxon, began exports in 2014, positioning Papua New Guinea as a significant energy producer. The new project agreement was signed yesterday at Government House in Port Moresby attended by Kua, Prime Minister James Marape and representatives of Total, Exxon Mobil and Oil Search. Kua said the signing would enabled the Front End Engineering & Design to go ahead, with the Construction phase to follow in due course.



PNG's Petroleum Minister Kerenga Kua signs the Papua LNG Project Agreement with representatives of developers Total and partners ExxonMobil and Oil Search. 9 February, 2021 Photo: PNG PM Media



PNG's government celebrates the signing of the Papua LNG Project Agreement with representatives of developers Total and partners ExxonMobil and Oil Search. 9 February, 2021 Photo: PNG PM Media

## **Landowners demand settlement**

By Poreni Umau, Post-Courier, February 9, 2021

Landowners of the abandoned Sinivit mine in East New Britain Province have called on the National Government to compensate them. The Sinivit mine, known as the Wild Dog Mine, was abandoned by Canadian developer New Guinea Gold in 2014 without paying the stranded 120 workers and for damage to the environment. The landowners, through their three major clans of Namatlaman, Kasapki and Mararap on behalf of the eight sub clans with a membership of more than 3000 people, support the call by Pious Mano Kornainai, a former camp manager at the site, for the National Government and the East New Britain provincial government to intervene and pay former employees who are still waiting to be paid their dues and the landowners over compensation for environmental damages.

Lanis Rokoi, deputy chairman of Namatlaman landowners association, said with the National Government's planned K9 million clean-up of the site, there was still compensation payments owed to the traditional landowners. He was joined by Robin Rokoi, director of the Sinivit landowners association and Nason Apisai last week, to echo the sentiments shared by Mr Kornainai that outstanding payments needed to be settled including landowner compensation, workers entitlements and money owed to local contractors in Kokopo. Mr Apisai said it was good that the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority, through Minister Wera Mori, has announced the expensive clean-up but appealed to the government to help in payment of the money owed by the developer. The landowners said they have been left high and dry with nothing from the developer and hope that some of the money used for the clean-up program be used to compensate them.

## **Miner pays clans, groups**

February 9, 2021 The National Business

CLANS and beneficiary groups in Madang's Ramu NiCo project have started receiving their second land use compensation payments totalling K477,978.48 last Friday. Ramu NiCo (MCC) community affairs department's land and compensation officer Sakias Abaro explained that the payments were the second for 2020. "The compensation is paid out under the revised land and environment compensation agreement of 2019," he said. "The payments were made for the clearing of trees and other properties along the area where the pipeline of the Ramu NiCo project runs to reach the Basamuk refinery in Rai Coast." Abaro said from the total payments, K138,681.79 was for the future generation trust fund. The remaining K321,334.31 was the payable amount to the total of 209 in the project impacted areas.

A total of 40 beneficiaries received their payments through their bank account, while 169 clans and beneficiaries received their payments in cash. According to Ramu NiCo, the revised land and compensation agreement of 2019 sees vast improvement in many areas to cater for landowners that included adjustments and the latest valuer general rates. The four impact areas landowners' chairmen had unanimously agreed and thanked Ramu NiCo management for the huge improvement in the compensation rates contained in the revised environment and compensation agreement. The remarkable increase was the annual compensation payment which saw 100 per cent increase from K600,000 annually since 2000 in the old agreement to K1.3 million.

## **CEPA has failed Morobe, says Saonu**

BY JERRY SEFE, Post-Courier, February 8, 2021

The Conservation Environment Protection Authority (CEPA) and the Minister responsible for CEPA Wera Mori have failed the Morobe Provincial Government and the people of Morobe. Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu said this, last week, while giving the provincial government's stand following the National Government's decision on the deep sea tailings placement (DSTP) to proceed forthwith for the development of the Wafi-Golpu project. Mr Saonu, however, said the authority and the minister have failed miserably by not honouring the stand of Morobe provincial government and its people against DSTP, which would see the dumping of the mine's wastes into the waters of Morobe. "I was not even bribed and let me be clear to the people of Morobe that I have never received any form of bribery on this matter nor have I been in any bribery situation since my political career," Mr Saonu said. "My decision is final.

The next step for us now is to take the matter to court and already our legal team has been directed to look into it and all Morobe leaders and elites must stand in to support the stand by MPG." He said CEPA has failed to respond to the review of alternative options for terrestrial land tailings sent to the State negotiation team to review and provide report. Mr Soanu, who is the deputy leader of the Pangu Pati, which is leading the current National Government, is on a collision course with his party leader and Prime Minister James Marape over this issue. This will be the second battle that might lead to the delay of Wafi-Golpu project if the government fails to honour the voice of the Government and people of Morobe. Pangu Pati secretary for Morobe Antans Sinur also said the nine MPs of Morobe (under Pangu banner) are not standing with the governor in this fight and must come forward to make their stand clearly.

Mr Sinur said an open forum will be held to have all these MPs to address the people of Morobe on which side they are on in this fight for Wafi-Golpu DSTP issue. "The National Government including the Minister for Environment Wera Mori must respect the decision and the rights of the people of Morobe or else will have greater repercussions on the development of the mine," Sinur said. Mining Minister Johnson Tuke was also in Lae in a closed door discussions with the provincial government on matters related to DSTP, however, according to Mr Saonu, the minister will present reports to the prime minister on the standings of the provincial government and its people. Mr Saonu said there are options for terrestrial land tailing in place that will be further discussed in due course, but if the government still hesitates then the only solution is through court. He said he has been in discussions with the nine MPs of Morobe however was not through with all due to the recent government coalition. "Despite Morobe's fight against DSTP, the national government has decided to dump the mine's waste into the waters of Morobe and they just made the whole situation worse," he said.

## **Northern Territory to permanently ban seabed mining**

Moratorium had been extended twice by both the Country Liberal party and Labor governments  
Graham Readfearn, The Guardian, Fri 5 Feb 2021

Seabed mining will be permanently banned in the [Northern Territory](#) after an almost decade-long moratorium on the destructive practice runs out next month, the territory government has announced. Conservationists, traditional owner representatives and the territory's mining lobby all welcomed the decision, announced on Friday morning. The territory's environment minister, Eva Lawler, said in making the decision the government was protecting the natural environment and the jobs that relied on it. "Our natural environment is one of our best assets and it's a large part of what makes living in the territory so special," she said.

The decision comes after both the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority sent separate reports to the government last year on seabed mining. The EPA report said there had been 26 applications to carry out explorations and mining in the territory's waters before the moratorium came into effect in 2012. The moratorium was extended twice by both the Country Liberal party and Labor governments. The EPA report said likely targets for mining companies were gold, diamonds, rare earth minerals, salt deposits and other minerals including manganese, phosphate and bauxite. The report said: "The techniques available for seabed exploration and mining are continually advancing and the methods most likely to be used in coastal waters of the Northern Territory involve scraping or excavating the seabed using hydraulic or mechanical dredges." The Aboriginal Area's Protection Authority told the Guardian it had requested the moratorium be extended, and fully supported the government's decision to replace the block with a permanent ban. "Even small-scale seabed mining activities may interfere with or damage marine sacred sites," it said in a statement.

In 2016, the Anindilyakwa Land Council, which represents the traditional owners of the Groote archipelago – an area which had been identified by seabed mining companies for its manganese deposits – said traditional owners believed sand mining would "destroy sacred sites and songlines that are central to Anindilyakwa culture and identity". Adele Pedder, a marine conservation campaigner at Keep Top End Coasts Healthy, said traditional owners, environment groups, commercial and recreational fishers, tourism operators and scientists had all raised concerns about the potential impacts of a seabed mining industry. She said conservationists had been concerned the EPA report was part of a process that would have paved the way for a go ahead for seabed mining. She said mining corporations had applied to mine "some of our most precious places" including Fog, Anson and Blue Mud Bays, the Wessel Islands and Limmen Bight. "The Top End has some of the last healthy tropical coasts in the world. Seabed mining is like bulldozing the seafloor. It would decimate our marine life, pollute our waters, threaten our fishing and destroy places of cultural significance."

She said the Gunner government had "demonstrated their commitment to protect our coasts and safeguard our fishing, lifestyle and regional economies." Greenpeace Australia Pacific spokeswoman Nelli Stevenson said it was a "great day for common sense", adding: "Mining the sea floor is an absolutely insane idea, and the Northern Territory government has made a critically important move in banning it." Drew Wagner, executive director of the Minerals Council of Australia's Northern Territory division, told the Guardian he also welcomed the decision. "Moratoriums are a blunt instrument and the reality was that we advised that sea bed mining was not necessary. We are quite pleased this blunt instrument has been removed. "We don't have the evidence on a risk-based scenario to say it's safe for the territory's environment or that it can be done in a safe and protective way. If you can't prove that it's safe then it won't be entertained."

## **Geräuschkulisse der Ozeane. Krachmacher Mensch**

SpiegelOnline 05.02.2021

Dynamitfischen, Offshore-Windparks und Kreuzfahrten: Der Lärm in Ozeanen nimmt laut einem Bericht von Forschern aus elf Ländern massiv zu. Dadurch werden Robben schwerhörig und Wale vertrieben.

An Land sind uns Naturgeräusche gewöhnlich vertraut: Vogelzwitschern, Windsäuseln, das Knacksen im Unterholz. Die Geräuschkulisse der Ozeane ist für den Menschen hingegen ein Mysterium. Dabei gibt es Tierarten, die ganz besondere Klanglandschaften erzeugen. Genau wie an Land kommunizieren sie miteinander, etwa bei der Paarung oder der Nahrungssuche. Diese sensible Geräuschwelt bringt der Mensch immer mehr durcheinander, wie ein internationales Forscherteam in der Zeitschrift »Science« schreibt. In ihrer Bestandsaufnahme zeigen die mehr als zwei Dutzend

Wissenschaftler aus elf Staaten wie Fischerei, Schifffahrt und Offshore-Parks den Tieren schweren Schaden zufügen. Dafür werteten die Forscher rund 10.000 Studien aus. Ihr Fazit: In den Ozeanen wird es immer lauter. Dabei begann die Lärmbelastigung durch den Menschen erst vor rund 200 Jahren mit der Industriellen Revolution. Vorher störten nur Seebeben, Unterwasservulkane oder das Krachen von Eis die Klangidylle.



Bei über 90 Prozent der Meeressäuger beobachteten die Forscher negative Folgen von Lärm; Foto: Ian Montgomery / EyeEm / Getty Images

### **Lärm-Kakophonie mit Airguns und Dynamit**

Die Lärmbelastigung der Meerestiere hat viele Ursachen: Expeditionen suchen mithilfe von seismischen Druckluftkanonen – auch Airguns genannt – den Meeresgrund nach Bodenschätzen ab. Die geben laute Schüsse über ein breites Frequenzspektrum ab, deren Echos Aufschluss über die Beschaffenheit des Untergrunds geben. Das Militär nutzt Schallimpulse etwa zum Orten von U-Booten. Außerdem kreuzen immer mehr Schiffe über die Ozeane, vom Grund werden Bodenschätze gefördert und in vielen Küstenregionen Südostasiens und Afrikas wird mit Dynamit gefischt. Auch die Energiewende trägt zu einem höheren Geräuschpegel bei: Beim Bau von Bohrinseln und Offshore-Windparks werden Verankerungen in den Meeresboden gerammt.

»In den letzten 50 Jahren hat der stärkere Schiffsverkehr den niederfrequenten Lärm entlang der Haupttrouten um schätzungsweise das 32-fache verstärkt«, schreiben die Autoren in der Studie. Der Menschenlärm überlagere die Tierlaute um ein Vielfaches. Die Direktorin des Alfred-Wegener-Instituts (AWI), Antje Boetius, zeichnete in beiden Polarregionen tief unter der Wasseroberfläche Geräusche auf – unter anderem in der zwischen Nordgrönland und Spitzbergen gelegenen Framstraße: »Auf den Aufnahmen hört man ständig die Schallwellen von Technologien zur Suche nach Öl und Gas«, so Boetius. Wenn der Lärm gelegentlich – etwa an Weihnachten – verstumme, komme eine völlig andere Klangkulisse zum Vorschein: »Erst dann hört man die Natur selbst, zum Beispiel die Vielfalt der Wale, die da singen.«

### **Schwerhörige Robben und Schweinswale**

Die Dauerbeschallung ändert laut den Forschern auch das Verhalten der Tiere und macht sie krank. Die Folgen seien bei 80 Prozent der Fische und Wirbellosen zu beobachten, bei Meeressäugern sind es sogar 90 Prozent. Zur Rohstoffsuche verwendete Schallkanonen könnten bei Meeresebewohnern mitunter bleibende Hörschäden hinterlassen, sagt AWI-Forscherin Ilse van Opzeeland. Nachgewiesen sei das etwa bei Schweinswalen und Robben. Etliche Arten fliehen vor dem menschlichen Lärm in ruhigere Gewässer. Für viele Meerestiere sei das jedoch nicht möglich, schreiben die Studienautoren. Beispielsweise bei dem in Neuseeland heimischen Maui-Delfin, der vom Aussterben bedroht ist. Nicht genannt werden in dem »Science«-Bericht Walstrandungen, die Umweltgruppen oft mit Unterwasserlärm in Verbindung bringen. Für die Tötung durch Schall gebe es jedoch keinen eindeutigen

Beweis, sagt AWI-Direktorin Boetius. Denn oft hätten tote Meeressäuger auch Mägen voller Müll. Zwar seien Fälle bekannt, bei denen Wale und Tümmler durch Militärübungen oder durch Dynamit-Fischen umgekommen seien. Aber einen Beleg dafür, dass Lärm direkt die Mortalität von Meeresbewohnern erhöhe, gebe es nicht. Andere Folgen seien dagegen »sehr gut belegt«.

### **Forscher fordern Lärmschutz für die Meere**

Bisher werde Lärm in internationalen Vereinbarungen wie dem Übereinkommen über die biologische Vielfalt (CBD) ignoriert, bemängeln die Studienautoren. »Das Thema ist nicht so prominent, weil es für die Menschen nicht so sichtbar ist wie ein Strand voller Plastikmüll«, sagt Boetius. Als Ausnahme nennen die Forscher die Meeresstrategie-Rahmenrichtlinie der Europäischen Union: Sie erkennt Lärm ausdrücklich als Stressfaktor an und fordert die Mitgliedstaaten auf, die Lärmverschmutzung zu überwachen und zu verringern. »Auch der Antarktis-Vertrag enthält viele Auflagen – nicht nur für den Zugang für Schiffe, sondern auch auf für die Exploration von Ressourcen – sogar für Schallwellen-gestützte Forschung«, so Boetius.

Für einen flächendeckenden Lärmschutz im Meer empfehlen die Forscher die Regulierung der Schifffahrtsrouten und Tempolimits. Künftig könnten auch Elektromotoren oder geräuschärmere Propeller den Schiffslärm senken. Der Lärm beim Bau von Offshore-Windparks lasse sich mit technischen Vorkehrungen wie etwa Blasenschleiern (Bubble Curtains) reduzieren – eine Art Schutzschicht aus künstlich erzeugten Blasen im Wasser. Weil der Schweinswal bereits aus vielen Gebieten der Nordsee vertrieben wurde, ist es in deutschen Gewässern inzwischen Pflicht, den Schall beim Einrammen der Pfähle in den Meeresboden zu dämpfen.

### **Pressure expected**

February 5, 2021, The National Business

MELBOURNE: Rio Tinto chairman Simon Thompson is set to face further pressure over the board's handling of the destruction of sacred rock shelters in Australia after an Indigenous group accused him of breaking a personal promise, analysts said. The traditional owners of the rock shelters said Thompson had told them Rio's acting head of iron ore Ivan Vella, who had led reconciliation efforts, would see the process through to its end, The Australian newspaper reported yesterday, citing a letter to Rio from the traditional owners. Rio announced last week that Vella would move to Canada to head its aluminium business. – Reuters

### **Firm directors face fraud charge over K268mil landowners fund**

February 5, 2021, The National

TWO more company directors are facing fraud-related charges in relation to the K268 million allegedly missing from a landowners' trust funds in Western. Police Commissioner David Manning confirmed yesterday that the two were arrested at Ningerum in Kiunga, Western at about 4am on Tuesday and flown to Port Moresby. They each face five counts of false pretence, five counts of conspiracy and five counts of misappropriation in relation to the Western province people's dividends community mine continuation Agreement trust fund. A female director and a lawyer have already appeared in court in Port Moresby as a result of the same investigation conducted by the special police forensic criminal investigation team headed by Manning.

The latest two are directors of the Ok Tedi Fly River Development Foundation Limited. As part of the investigations, police searched the company's records held with Investment Promotion Authority (IPA). Police allege that the 147,000-plus people of CMCA communities who own the K268mil trust fund never authorised the registration of Ok Tedi foundation and the appointment of its



directors, secretary and shareholders. Five amounts were allegedly paid out of the account from Aug 17, 2018 to Feb 21, 2020, totalled K268 million, according to police. Police alleged that the payments were done not in compliance with the requirements of the trust instrument and the expenditures not consistent with the intended purpose of the trust funds.

### **Saonu confirms stand against deep sea tailing system**

By JIMMY KALEBE, February 5, 2021, The National

MOROBE Governor Ginson Saonu has reiterated the opposition of the provincial government and landowners to the use of deep sea tailing placement system (DSTP) in the K18.4 billion Wafi-Golpu mining project. He said they were considering challenging in court the Government's decision to grant an environment permit to the project joint venture operators. "The people of Morobe totally do not agree with the scientific evidence provided by the Wafi-Golpu joint venture on the DSTP," he said. "We have instructed our lawyers to commence legal proceedings against the (Government's decision)," Saonu said. The granting of the environment permit means the project will use the DSTP as its means of waste disposal.

The people of Morobe and the provincial government had during all the consultations over the project with various stakeholders stated that their stand is: No to DSTP and Yes to the Wafi-Golpu copper-gold project. Saonu accused Environment and Conservation Minister Wera Mori who signed the environment permit of failing the people of Morobe. "I can't let this decision take effect and create disharmony, disunity and disaster to the people of Morobe in the future," Soanu said. Soanu said they had met with Government officials and written letters to them about their concerns. "The Government must listen to the people as it is for the people, by the people," he said. "We must not put money first and forget the concerns of the people."

### **Projects will be signed: PM**

By GYNNIE KERO, February 5, 2021 The National

PRIME Minister James Marape says agreements on three multi-billion kina resource projects are expected to be signed in the next few weeks. During a breakfast with members of the business community in Port Moresby yesterday, he thanked the investors of the US\$5.4 billion (K18.49 billion) Wafi-Golpu copper and gold project, US\$13 billion (K44.5 billion) Papua LNG project and the US\$525 million (K1.7 billion) Pasca-offshore oil and gas project. He said the final instruments for the Papua LNG project would be signed with the operator next week. "TOTAL (have indicated) that next week we'll sign the last instruments that needs to be cleared, at Government House," he said. "The managing director based in Singapore will come.

"We have given the necessary permit for Wafi-Golpu to get off the ground. "For Pasca, we hope to sign the agreement soon." Marape said the projects would be handled within existing legislative regimes. "I want to thank the investors of these projects for their patience," he said. "We expect that in a month or so, full maturity of these projects would be seen as far as projects agreements are concerned." Marape said the reopening of the Porgera gold mine in Enga "remains my top priority". "If everything goes to plan, Porgera should start in the first half of this year," he said.

**Morobe Provincial Government to sue PNG Government over Mining Waste disposal method**  
 PNG Today, February 04, 2021, Business News, Headlines, Mining News



Pic: Minister for Environment and Climate Change Wera Mori signing the Environmental Approval in Principal position paper in November last year which paves way for the granting of the Environmental Permit to Newcrest and Harmony to develop the Wafi Golpu mine.

Papua New Guinea's Morobe Governor Ginson Soanu has announced that he will take the National Government to court regarding the granting of an Environmental Permit to the Developer of Wafi Golpu Joint Venture, Newcrest and Harmony. Governor Soanu said having taken advice and upon consultation with relevant Community and Church Leaders of Morobe Province, his Provincial Government feels compelled to once again take the National Government to Court over the granting to WGJV, the Environmental Permit to dump its waste into the Huon Gulf. He said in doing so and as the duly mandated Political Leader of Morobe, he made a call to every Morobe, in all corner of Morobe to join him in fighting against Deep Sea Tailings Placement - DSTP. "Our position has been to say "YES TO WAFI-GOLPU, NO TO DSTP." That remains the position of the people of Morobe. I wish to announce that our Lawyers have been instructed to commence legal proceedings without delay against DSTP," he said. Some of the grounds on which the challenge will be based are as follows:

1. We are NOT against the Mine. But we reject DSTP.
2. Regardless of the scientific evidence that WGJV claims there is, we the people of Morobe do not and will not accept DSTP. We are convinced that the scientific evidence that points to poisonous and destructive waste being dumped as "redflagged" in the Reviews organized by CEPA, are the correct findings. The fact that CEPA and WGJV are simply ignoring these red flags, instead of exploring them in a professional manner (as urged during the consultative workshops), is testimony to their joint reckless disregard to the genuine concerns of the people who live along the coast and who utilize the Huon Gulf Marine Resources.
3. We do not believe and we do not accept that the so-called consultations held by or with the people along the coast are representative of persons who truly know the meaning and extent of what the DSTP Proposes to do that is, to poison their livelihood.
4. We are fed up with a Government, that will not listen to the concerns of the people regarding the environment.
5. Equally, we are fed up with Foreign Companies that pay lip service to so-called meaningful consultations with the people, but who will ignore pertinent scientific evidence that point to DSTP as destructive to the Rich Fisheries Resources in Huon Gulf.

6. We are fed up with companies that put profit first and deny the peaceful and harmonious environmental concerns of the people.
7. CEPA Minister and WGJV have chosen to ignore all the environmental concerns of the people. This is reflected in the grant of the Environmental Permit, in which ALL of the "Red Flags" raised by prominent PNG Biologist Professor Ralph Mana have been utterly and completely ignored, as if it did not matter. It might not matter to the Company or even to the Government of Papua New Guinea. But when the permit proposes to pollute the waters of the Huon Gulf, that is a matter of concern to the Government of Morobe and its people.
8. We will challenge the legality of the construction of the Pipeline outside the SML, to dump rubbish into the Huon Gulf. We are prepared to take the matter internationally if forced to do so. Our concerns are not centered on profit. Our concerns arise from the fact that dumping of waste into the Huon Gulf:
- a. Will poison the fisheries; from which the livelihood of persons living from Siassi, Finschafen along the coast to Morobe Patrol Post will be profoundly affected. It is not a risk that our people are prepared to take lying down.
  - b. The possibility of a repeat of the Basamuk experience has already been forecast. DSTP is NOT acceptable.
9. ELECTED LEADERS: I call on all the elected Leaders in Morobe to support this fight. In particular, I call on the Member for Huon and the Member for Bulolo to take the front line in this challenge. Our people are being affected. Their future is being compromised. As elected Leaders, we are duty bound to fight for the safety and the livelihood of the people, not just the few that will enjoy the benefits.
10. I call on all the Churches and the congregation of Christians in Morobe regardless of which Christian denomination you belong to. Do not be idle.  
"Stand up for Justice. Stand up for what is right and fair and just. Stand up for your people."
11. FORUM AGAINST DSTP: On Wednesday 10th February 2021, a Forum will be held in Lae at the Sir Ignatius Kilage Stadium. It will provide the opportunity for all of Morobe to protest against DSTP and put a stop to it. Morobeans from far and near, come to that forum and express your opposition and your outrage.
12. As Governor, I have done what I could. Now, it is up to you the people to join together and fight this evil called DSTP.

## **Businesses hail announcement of Wafi-Golpu project's permit**

By SHIRLEY MAULUDU, February 4, 2021, The National Business

THE business community has welcomed the Government's announcement that a key resource project, the K18.4 billion Wafi-Golpu copper-mine, has been granted an environment permit. It was announced by Environment, Conservation and Climate Change Minister Wera Mori. Bank South Pacific group chief executive Robin Fleming said the approval of the environment permit was one of a number of approvals required before the project could begin. "But it is a positive indicator of progress on a project that will be important to Morobe and Papua New Guinea," he said. "A significant resource project such as Wafi-Golpu will provide significant economic benefits to Morobe in construction, contracting, retail and support services sectors as well as increased employment, and importantly provide a counter balance to economic activity that will be in Port Moresby and Gulf once the Papua LNG project commences."

The Wafi-Golpu project is a 50-50 joint venture between the Newcrest Mining Ltd and Harmony Gold Mining Limited. But, the Mineral Resources Authority (MRA) is yet to receive an official copy of the environment permit for the special mining lease application for Wafi-Golpu. Managing director Jerry Garry said the special mining lease (SML) application was lodged by the joint partners on Aug 28, 2016. Garry said the MRA learnt about the environment permit in the media. "The

Wafi-Golpu JV has an obligation to provide a copy to the MRA as a mandatory requirement and pre-requisite for the special mining lease 10 application to be deliberated by the Mining Advisory Council,” he said.

### Small-scale production vital

February 4, 2021, The National Business



SMALL-scale gold production is a very important part of the economy and needs to be nurtured, according to K92 Mining chief executive officer John Lewins. Lewins told The National that small-scale alluvial mining, for example, reportedly contributed between 100,000 ounces to 140,000 ounces of gold annually. At the current global price, it is worth between K600 million to K800 million. “However, accurate numbers are difficult to estimate,” Lewins said. “The sector needs appropriate policies to support it. “But it also needs to be properly regulated to ensure that it is done in a sustainable way and does not negatively impact the environment and communities. “The Mineral Resource Authority (MRA) has been developing appropriate policies and legislation to support the sector and to improve the knowledge and skills of miners involved in this sector through the small-scale mining school and outreach programmes.”



By DALE LUMA

Lewins said access to funding to help in the purchase of equipment to start or expand operations would also benefit individuals and groups. Another area he suggested could assist the sector was a more formalised gold trading system. Lewins also believed that the sector could be reserved for locals. The MRA regards small-scale mining as a relatively untapped industry but with huge potential. Between 60,000 and 80,000 miners earn a living out of alluvial mining by using non-mechanical methods. The MRA's Wau Small-Scale Mining Training School in Wau, Morobe, has more than 200 students graduating after each session. The school trains artisanal miners on simple geology, mining techniques, occupational health and safety, including the proper use of mercury, and business skills in business management and book keeping.

## **New Caledonia govt collapses amid political unrest and assets sale**

Radio New Zealand on 3 February 2021

A coalition government in New Caledonia, a French territory in the Pacific has collapsed after pro-independence politicians resigned, citing persistent economic issues and unrest over the sale of nickel assets.



Five pro-independence politicians, who are members of the pro-independent Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), in the 11-member executive have resigned. Photo: AFP

The South Pacific archipelago has been gripped by riots over the sale process of Brazilian mining giant Vale's local nickel business, with protesters saying a locally-led offer had been unfairly overlooked. New Caledonia, with a population of about 290,000, is also grappling with the question of decolonisation. The island chain enjoys a large degree of autonomy but depends heavily on France for matters such as defence and education. Referendums in 2018 and 2020 both rejected independence. A third referendum due by the end of next year should finally settle the issue, under the terms of a 1998 agreement with France. Five pro-independence politicians, who are members of the pro-independent Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), in the 11-member executive have resigned.

The upheaval marks the end of President Thierry Santa's multi-party government after 18 months in power. Congress must elect a new government within 15 days. The Santa-led anti-independence coalition, L'avenir en confiance, said in a statement that separatists were causing a political crisis in the middle of a pandemic and amid economic and social tensions. The separatists' resignation letter said a "crisis of confidence" had set in and that the government was not functioning properly at an important time when preparations were needed to be made for the next independence vote. The

letter also said the nickel asset sale favoured the interests of multinationals over locals. New Caledonia is the world's fourth-largest nickel producer, behind Indonesia, the Philippines and Russia. Demand for nickel, mainly used in making stainless steel, is expected to grow rapidly as a raw material in electric vehicle batteries. Vale wants to sell its nickel business in New Caledonia to a consortium of buyers including Swiss commodities trader Trafigura. Indigenous Kanak leaders had supported an earlier bid designed to keep majority ownership under the control of the island territory. - *Reuters*

### **Wafi-Golpu ‘similar’ to LNG projects**

By SHIRLEY MAULUDU, February 2, 2021, The National Business

THE Wafi-Golpu copper/gold project in Morobe has more in common with liquefied natural gas (LNG) development in the country than conventional mining, a senior researcher says. Institute of National Affairs executive director Paul Barker said the project would be similar to LNG development in terms of the economic impacts. “It entails very large upfront capital costs, and being a large but very deep mine, it will be largely automated, with little underground human activity,” he said. “So, there will be a fair amount of work and contracts during the construction phase, but thereafter, it will entail a relatively modest workforce of highly skilled staff operating computers and robotic plant and equipment. “The mine won’t therefore be emptying large numbers directly in the mine, beyond that construction phase. “Beyond the tailing, the mine will also have less apparent physical impact on the landscape than, say a conventional open pit operation. “But the company knows they need their community engagement and support from landowners and mine affected communities.”

### **Call to reopen Porgera ‘quickly’**

By SHIRLEY MAULUDU, February 2, 2021, The National Business

AN economist has welcomed the progress being made to start construction work on the K18 billion-plus Wafi-Golpu project, saying it will be a big boost to the economy. But Paul Barker, the executive director of the Institute of National Affairs, said it would be better in the short-term to focus attention on reopening the Porgera gold mine quickly. Barker said the Wafi-Golpu project would take time. “With Wafi-Golpu, we still have much further to go,” he said. Barker said PNG had “taken quite a blow with the unnecessary closure of the Porgera gold mine last year”. “(Reaching) an immediate and practical agreement between the Government, Barrick and partners over equity and commencement will have a more immediate restorative effect,” he said. “It will enable contractors and employees to be rehired and work, production, exports and revenue to start flowing again in the relatively short future.”

Barker was responding to the announcement last week by the Environment, Conservation and Climate Change Minister Wera Mori on the granting of an environment permit for the project in Morobe. The US\$5.4 billion (K18.72bil) Wafi-Golpu project is a 50-50 joint venture between the Newcrest Mining Ltd and Harmony Gold Mining Ltd. Barker said: “The environment plan, which clearly won’t please everyone, although the experts say that the deep-sea tailings) option would post the least impact and risks, in comparison with a tailings dam in a very technically unstable area. “There is still a lot of work to be done leading to a special mining lease and subsequent requirements, apart from the financing of such a major venture in a difficult global capital market, especially for developing countries (especially those with some track record of uncertainty in the field of mining).”

## Could the world's deep seas become China's mining frontier?

- Chinese researchers have spent the last decade mapping the globe's ocean floors looking for potential mineral deposits
- The results offer insight into what kind of reserves are out there, scientists say

Stephen Chen in Beijing, South China Morning Post, 2 Feb, 2021

Chinese researchers say they have identified a number of “strategically important” deep sea mineral deposits as part of a decade-long survey of the world's sea floors. The researchers conducted a series of government-funded surveys from 2011 to 2020 and located potentially high-yield deposits of various essential industrial minerals from nickel to rare earths, according to a paper published in the Chinese-language *Bulletin of Mineralogy, Petrology and Geochemistry* last week. A few of the deposits were in the [South China Sea](#), but most were in the Indian, Atlantic and Pacific oceans, far from China. Nevertheless, the intensity of Chinese prospecting activities in these distant areas “has surpassed that of other countries”, said the researchers led by Shi Xuefa from the First Institute of Oceanography at the Ministry of Natural Resources.

China's rapid economic development over the last few decades has led to a huge demand for imported resources, such as high-quality iron ore from Australia and Brazil to make steel for infrastructure. In recent years, China's attention has turned to untapped resources under the oceans. The amount of rare earths on the sea floor alone is thought to dwarf those on land by 1,000 times, according to one estimate by Japanese researchers at the University of Tokyo. But much of the sea floor is uncharted and exploiting any reserves requires precise understanding of the location and size of the deposits. In the paper, Shi and his colleagues said China had filled in some of those gaps. For example, the survey found reserves of nickel – a metal that could boost the performance of electric car batteries – tended to be found on the sides undersea mountains rather than on the peaks or in basins.

The surveys were allowed under authorisation from the United Nations' International Seabed Authority based in Jamaica. The agreements between the UN agency and Beijing give China access to more areas for mineral prospecting than any other country. The terms allow China to exploit the most valuable deposits in return for doing the surveys. According to the researchers, China's future deep sea mining activities would likely be focused in the southern Atlantic Ocean, the northwestern and southwestern Indian Ocean, the central Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea. In these areas, Chinese research vessels have discovered a large number of previously unknown “chimneys” pumping mineral-rich material to the sea floor from the depths of the Earth. Some deposits contained ores of high enough quality for commercial exploitation for over two decades, according to the study.

But building large mining facilities in these remote, sometimes contentious waters would be a challenge. India has already raised concerns about Chinese activities in the Indian Ocean, including the Chinese military's considerable naval fleet to protect its commercial liners and other interests in the area. The United States has also sent [spy planes to monitor Chinese research vessels](#) mapping and planting devices in seabeds near Guam. Beijing has some ambitious projects for [deep sea exploration](#). It has built manned submersibles that can reach some of the world's greatest depths and is developing a deep sea station and unmanned sea floor base operated by robots. With the help of floating nuclear power stations, the technology is expected to pave way for the commercial exploitation of natural resources from several thousand metres under the ocean.

## **Ginson reveals plans for mine business arm**

By GLORIA BAUAI, February 1, 2021, The National

MOROBE Governor Ginson Saonu has revealed plans to form a separate business arm for the province to solely deal with the K18.4 billion Wafi-Golpu copper-gold project. The plan was discussed with landowners at the recent consultative meeting in Lae. “The Wafi mine is a big project and every proceed from the mine must be kept separate hence, the need to create a business structure for landowners and the provincial government,” he said. The unit will have a team to manage it ensure “accountability with how much the Wafi mine is sending to the provincial government”. He said a structure would be set up to guide the landowners in managing their business activities. “As it is, they are doing things on their own which may cause chaos when attracting business investors in when the mine commences,” he said. Saonu said the landowner groups should form incorporated landowner groups (ILG). “Once we establish the business structure and it is approved by the PEC, they have the freedom to choose who they want to do business with. “The provincial government will know which incorporated landowner group is involved in what business so we can guide them.”

## **Mineral authority yet to receive environment permit: Director**

By SHIRLEY MAULUDU, February 1, 2021, The National

THE Mineral Resources Authority (MRA) is yet to receive a copy of the environment permit issued for the special mining lease application on the Wafi-Golpu copper/gold project in Morobe, an official says. Managing director Jerry Garry said the mining lease application was lodged by Wafi-Golpu joint venture partners Newcrest Mining Ltd and Harmony Gold Mining Ltd, on Aug 28, 2016. “However, the MRA has only learnt about the issuance of the environment permit through the mainstream media,” Garry told The National. He was responding to the announcement last week by the Environment, Conservation and Climate Change Minister Wera Mori that the Government had granted the environment permit so that the construction phase of the project could start. “The Wafi-Golpu joint venture has an obligation to provide a copy to the MRA as a mandatory requirement and pre-requisite for the SML 10 application to be deliberated by the Mining Advisory Council (Mac),” Garry said.

“The environment permit is an independent and very rigorous process guided by the Environment Act 2000 and its associated regulations. “It mainly identifies impacts of the mining project on environment, people, socio-economy and devise management plans to mitigate and reduce adverse effects. “Once an environment permit is issued to project development proponents, the council will be satisfied and comfortable that waste streams and impacts have been dealt with to the satisfaction of the State. “When the copy of the environment permit for SML10 reaches the MRA, the technical assessment will table their technical assessment before the council. “The council may request further information from the proponents until it is fully satisfied.”

He said the process could take up to three months.

## **Panguna landowners ready to hold talks over mine**

February 1, 2021, The National Business

THE Panguna landowners in Bougainville are ready to begin talks with the Autonomous Bougainville Government about the Panguna mine. According to a statement from the Panguna Development Company Ltd, the members, eight of the nine mine-affected landowner associations and chiefs had held meetings and respected President Ishmael Toroama’s statement about the ABG’s position on Panguna and how any move should be done through correct channels and to follow proper



processes. “Our group has contacted departments in charge of economic development, which includes the Department of the President and BEC, office of the deputy acting chief secretary and the deputy chief secretary of operations – Michael Otoroa,” the statement said. “We are keen to get a process underway at the president and ABG’s convenience.” The company is owned by five major clans in Panguna, including the recognised lands title commission agents who represent block owners in the former special mining lease area.

Company chairman Michael Pariu said: “The only way the redevelopment of Panguna will ever advance is if there is a common ground, unity and trust among landowners, the ABG and the people of Bougainville. “Moving ahead in a unified way is crucial and any other prospective partners will need to work hard to win social licence in Bougainville. “This is not something that can be claimed or granted by unrepresentative voices. “In considering this, the PDCL, eight mine-affected landowner associations and the member see value in involving the new Bougainville Copper Ltd in some capacity, given the company is now majority owned by the people of Bougainville and PNG.” Pariu said the Bougainville Copper Ltd continued to have a positive presence and was respectful and helpful in its dealings with the people.

### **Pionier für Tiefseebergbau »Wir werden die Förderung von Rohstoffen revolutionieren«**

*In der Tiefsee sollen bald wertvolle Metalle geborgen werden. Unternehmer Gerard Barron will damit reich werden – betont aber lieber, wie gut das für den Klimaschutz wäre. Stimmt das?*

Ein Interview von Stefan Schultz  
SpiegelOnline 30.01.2021

Der Mann, der bald die Tiefsee erobern will, wirkt mit seiner Lederjacke und seinem Vollbart mehr wie ein Edelrocker als ein Bergbauboss. Sein draufgängerisches Äußeres passt allerdings zum Geschäftsfeld, das Gerard Barron, 54, beackert: Es befindet sich in lichtlosen Welten, vier- bis sechstausend Meter unter dem Meeresspiegel. Dort unten liegen gewaltige Rohstoffschätze, die dank neuer Technik bald gehoben werden sollen.

Eine Probe dieses Schatzes trägt Barron, Chef des kanadischen Tiefsee-Start-ups Deep Green, stets in der Tasche: Es ist ein schwarzer Stein, etwa so groß wie eine Kartoffel, eine sogenannte Manganknolle, die eines seiner Forschungsteams vom Grunde des Zentralpazifiks geborgen hat. Der Stein ist Millionen Jahre alt und voller Nickel, Kupfer, Kobalt und Mangan – Metalle, die unter anderem in der Elektromobilität eine wichtige Rolle spielen und die auf dem Festland zum Teil nur in wenigen, teils autokratisch regierten Ländern vorkommen.

Firmen wie Deep Green, UK Seabed Resources oder G-Tec Sea Mineral Resources und Regierungen wie Deutschland, Großbritannien oder China erkunden bereits intensiv, ob und wie Manganknollen kommerziell abgebaut werden können, ebenso sogenannte Massivsulfide und kobaltreiche Krusten. Analysten von BCC Research erwarten einen neuen Rohstoffrausch mit einem Marktvolumen von bis zu 15 Milliarden Dollar im Jahr 2030. Umweltschützer warnen vor der Zerstörung kaum erforschter Ökosysteme.

Die meisten Unternehmer, die in die Tiefsee drängen, begnügen sich damit, Investoren mit potenziellen Milliardenumsätzen zu umwerben. Barron will mehr. Der gebürtige Australier betont bei jeder Gelegenheit, wie gut Tiefseebergbau unterm Strich für die Umwelt wäre. Er wähnt sich auf einer »Mission« zum Wohle des Planeten. Naturschützer werfen ihm deshalb Greenwashing der besonders zynischen Art vor. Was ist dran an Barrons Argumenten?

SPIEGEL: Sie wollen die »verantwortungsvollste Bergbaufirma der Welt« aufbauen. Der Bergbaubranche wird oft Umweltzerstörung, Kinderarbeit oder Wirtschaftskolonialismus vorgeworfen. Entsprechend genießt Ihr Unternehmen einen gewissen Misstrauensvorschuss.

Barron: Zumindest bei Journalisten, ja.

SPIEGEL: Ebenso bei Umweltschützern und manchen Wissenschaftlern. Verstehen Sie die Kritik?

Barron: Ich finde eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit neuer Technik wie unserer fundamental wichtig. Und ich verstehe, dass Neues vielen Menschen erst einmal Angst macht. Aber mich stört der starke Negativfokus. Unsere Technologie kann im Kampf gegen die Erderhitzung nützlich sein. Wir wollen einfach, dass unsere Sicht der Dinge erwogen wird. Stattdessen wird undifferenziert gegen uns gehetzt, in Teilen auch von Ihrer Zunft.

SPIEGEL: Wie genau?

Barron: Wenn über Chancen und Risiken des Tiefseebergbaus berichtet wird, prägt die Kritik von Greenpeace & Co. oft die Schlagzeilen. Unsere Perspektive wird eher schwach gewichtet. Hängen bleiben vor allem überzogene Warnungen vor Umweltrisiken. Wie soll ich da auf Unterstützung der Zivilgesellschaft für mein Unternehmen hoffen?

SPIEGEL: Warum sollte die Gesellschaft Sie denn unterstützen?

Barron: Wir können viele Rohstoffe beschaffen, die für den Aufbau einer CO<sub>2</sub>-armen Weltwirtschaft nötig sind. Metalle, ohne die zum Beispiel Elektroautos, Windräder oder Solarpaneele nicht funktionieren, ohne die sich also die Klimaziele nicht erreichen lassen. Wir können diese Rohstoffe kostengünstiger und umweltverträglicher fördern als Bergbaukonzerne an Land.

Die Fördertechnik für Tiefseerohstoffe hat zuletzt Fortschritte gemacht. Deep Green peilt erste Pilotmissionen schon für 2022 an. Der Plan ist, bis zu 250 Tonnen schwere Maschinen im Ozean zu versenken und mit ihnen Manganknollen vom Meeresgrund zu klauben. Die Knollen sollen per Panzerschlauch an die Meeresoberfläche und per Frachtschiff an Land gelangen – wo man sie schließlich metallurgisch weiterverarbeitet. Ein industrielles Verfahren dafür muss erst noch entwickelt werden. Manche Forscher schätzen, dass die Verarbeitung mehr als die Hälfte der Betriebskosten ausmachen wird. Ob sich Tiefseebergbau lohne, sei deshalb schwer zu sagen.

SPIEGEL: Auf Ihrer Website präsentieren Sie sich als künftiger Beschaffer von Kobalt, Nickel, Mangan und Kupfer, etwa für Autobatterien. Sie haben selbst einmal eine Autobatteriefirma gegründet. Vermutlich wissen Sie also, dass Hersteller wie Tesla und BMW solch schwer erhältliche Metalle längst durch leichter verfügbare zu ersetzen versuchen?

Barron: Das stimmt. Allerdings sind noch längst nicht alle Hersteller so weit. Und vor allem schafft es kein Autobauer, auf Nickel zu verzichten. Ausgerechnet der Nickelabbau an Land führt aber immer wieder zu verheerenden Umweltschäden. In Indonesien schädigt das schon jetzt ozeanische Ökosysteme, weil Giftmüll einfach auf Korallenriffe gepumpt wird.

SPIEGEL: Vielleicht sollte es besser heißen: Bislang hat es kein Hersteller geschafft, auf Nickel zu verzichten? Auch hier ist technischer Fortschritt denkbar.

Barron: Absolut. Und ich würde ihn sehr begrüßen. Wir brauchen aber schon jetzt Lösungen, um die Elektromobilität und viele andere Branchen mit umweltverträglicheren Rohstoffen zu versorgen. Manganknollen bieten diese Chance.

SPIEGEL: Fragt sich nur, ob er wirklich so viel umweltverträglicher ist. In einer von Deep Green finanzierten Studie von April 2020 werden Land- und Tiefseebergbau verglichen. Es wirkt darin so, als verursauche aller Abbau an Land Umweltdesaster, wären voll von Kinderarbeitern und würden betroffenen Gemeinden ausschließlich Schaden bringen. Ist das nicht ein ähnlich zugespitztes Bild, wie Sie es im Journalismus beklagen?

Barron: Sie haben recht. Es sind nicht alle Landbergwerke nur schlecht. Im Durchschnitt aber lässt sich sagen, dass die Umweltbelastungen hier größer sind, weil Rohstoffe oft tief im Erdreich lagern und bei ihrem Abbau viel Biomasse zerstört wird. In der Tiefsee liegen sie einfach auf dem Meeresgrund herum und können minimalinvasiv abgesaugt werden. Der Tiefseebergbau zerstört daher im Schnitt 300-mal weniger Biomasse. Anders als beim Bergbau an Land gelangen zudem keine giftigen Stoffe in die Umwelt.

SPIEGEL: Ihre Technologie schneidet bei diesem Vergleich auch deshalb so gut ab, weil Sie noch nicht hinreichend erforschte Umweltfolgen des Tiefseebergbaus ausklammern. So erholen sich Ökosysteme in der Tiefsee sehr viel langsamer als an Land. Laut Ihren Berechnungen würden rund 508.000 Quadratkilometer Seeboden beeinträchtigt, wenn man Metalle für eine Milliarde E-Autos fördert. Es werden aber Sedimentwolken aufgewirbelt, wenn man Manganknollen vom Seeboden klaubt. Diese können teils kilometerweit abdriften und auch an anderer Stelle Flora und Fauna stören. Manche Wissenschaftler setzen deshalb das Vierfache an gefährdeter Fläche an.

Barron: Solche Schätzungen sind nach unseren Erfahrungen viel zu hoch. Die meisten Sedimentwolken, die wir bei Tests aufgewirbelt haben, sind in einem Umkreis von 100 bis 1000 Metern rasch wieder abgesunken. Wir führen dazu gerade weitere Experimente durch, auch das MIT forscht dazu. Ergebnisse beider Studien sollten in diesem Quartal vorliegen. Aufwirbelungen lassen sich zudem durch spezielle Abdeckungen an Fördergeräten reduzieren. Und: Besonders empfindliche Gebiete sind auf dem Meeresgrund gut sichtbar und können bei der Förderung ausgespart werden.

SPIEGEL: Sie wollen Manganknollen in der Clarion-Clipperton-Zone zwischen Mexiko und Hawaii fördern. Laut Studien könnten diese die Lebensgrundlage von mehr als 50 Prozent der dort ansässigen Arten sein. Würden diese durch den Abbau nicht getötet?

Barron: In der Clarion-Clipperton-Zone wollen außer uns noch viele weitere Firmen und Staaten schürfen. Die Internationale Meeresbodenbehörde (ISA), die die Lizenzen dafür vergibt, hat zwischen potenziellen Schürfgeländen Entlastungszonen abgesteckt. Diese sind unterm Strich sogar größer als die Abbaugelände.

SPIEGEL: Manche Spezies könnten an kleinräumige Ökosysteme gebunden sein und nicht einfach in Entlastungszonen ausweichen. Die Lebewesen in der Tiefsee sind zudem relativ wenig untersucht. Der deutsche Meeresforscher Matthias Haeckel sagt, es gebe dort unten womöglich mehr Arten als im Regenwald.

Barron: Das erstaunt mich. Die vielen Studien, die wir durchgeführt haben, zeigen, dass die Menge an Biomasse in der Clarion-Clipperton-Zone eher der von Wüstengebieten ähnelt. Es gibt keine Pflanzen, die meisten Tiere sind kleiner als vier Zentimeter. Natürlich sind auch diese schützenswert. Aber Landbergbau tötet weit mehr und weit größere Lebewesen.

In der Tiefsee leben unter anderem Seegurken, Tiefsee-Eidechsenfische oder Korallen wie die Gorgonien. Wie viele Spezies es wirklich dort unten gibt, ist kaum erforscht. Klar ist nur, dass die Zahl der entdeckten Arten mit fast jeder Forschungsmission weiter steigt.

SPIEGEL: Es geht Ihnen also um eine grundsätzliche Abwägung? Wie schaffen wir es, mit dem geringstmöglichen Schaden fürs globale Ökosystem eine CO<sub>2</sub>-arme Weltwirtschaft größtmöglich voranzubringen?

Barron: Korrekt. Es gibt keine perfekte Lösung. Aber wir glauben, dass Tiefseebergbau weit weniger schädlich für den Planeten und die Menschheit ist. Wir werden die Förderung von Rohstoffen revolutionieren.

SPIEGEL: Würde Tiefseebergbau wirklich zu einer Abnahme des Landbergbaus führen? Und nicht einfach zu mehr Bergbau insgesamt? Auch im Kongo gibt es zum Beispiel reiche Kupfer- und Kobaltvorkommen. Kaum vorstellbar, dass solche Minen geschlossen würden, wenn Sie loslegen.

Barron: Ich denke schon, dass unsere Technologie manche Bergbaufirma an Land aus dem Markt drängen wird. Weil wir kostengünstiger sein werden. Und weil unsere Metalle vielleicht irgendwann eine Art Öko-Gütesiegel tragen, sodass man sie bevorzugt kauft.

SPIEGEL: Eine weitere Technologie, die im Kampf um Marktanteile mitmischt, ist das Recycling. Derzeit wird ein Großteil der verbauten Erze nicht wiederverwertet. Dabei wäre das doch die umweltverträglichste aller Lösungen.

Barron: Definitiv. Deshalb ist Recycling auch Teil unserer Geschäftsstrategie. Wir arbeiten derzeit an einer Art Tracking-Mechanismus, der den Lebensweg von Rohstoffen von der Förderung über alle Produktzyklen hinweg bis zur Entsorgung verfolgt. Mein Ziel ist es, unser Tiefseegeschäft durch solche Lösungen möglichst rasch überflüssig zu machen. Leider reichen die bisher geförderten Metalle noch nicht für die globale Energiewende. Das, was noch fehlt, sollte

Barron: Bei Förderlizenzen an Land sind solche Verlängerungen oft Usus. Der Tiefseebergbau muss damit gleichgestellt werden – allein schon, um ihn für Investoren gleichermaßen attraktiv zu machen. Wir benötigen für den Abbau schließlich Milliarden Dollar an Kapital. Wir möchten aber trotzdem nach Ablauf der regulären Förderzeit durch sein.

SPIEGEL: 30 Jahre sind eine lange Zeit. Falls Sie Erfolg hätten: Hätte Sie bis dahin nicht längst ein Bergbaugigant wie Glencore geschluckt?

Barron: Definitiv nicht.

SPIEGEL: Oder Sie sind dann an der Börse notiert und müssten Ihren Aktionären erklären, warum Sie das lukrative Fördergeschäft plötzlich aufgeben möchten.

Barron: Das tue ich liebend gern, falls es dazu kommt. An meiner Entscheidung würde das aber nichts ändern.

## Die „Sonne“ und die tiefe See

Von Manfred Niekisch, Frankfurter Rundschau vom 29.1.2021

Manfred Niekisch ist Biologe und früherer Direktor des Frankfurter Zoos.



Ein Bild von der Tiefsee im Mariannengraben. © imago images

Wir wissen mehr über die Oberfläche des Mondes als über den Grund unserer Meere. Ein Forschungsteam will das ändern. Die Kolumne.

Eine Diva nennt man sie. Nein, es geht nicht um Greta Garbo, sondern um die „Ice Diva“. Der Kurzname steht für eine Forschungsexpedition, deren Bezeichnung ausgeschrieben umständlicher kaum sein könnte: „Icelandic marine Animals meet Diversity along latitudinal gradients in the deep sea of the Atlantic“. Selbst mit guten Englischkenntnissen lässt sich allenfalls ansatzweise erkennen, worum es geht: Von Island bis zu den Azoren soll die See untersucht werden, in Tiefenbereichen zwischen 4000 und 5000 Metern. Vom Schiff „Sonne“ aus, unter der Leitung des Forschungsinstitutes mit der klangvollen Bezeichnung „Senckenberg am Meer“, erkunden 21 Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler fünf Wochen lang die Beschaffenheit des Meeresbodens und die biologische Vielfalt dort unten. Es ist der Auftakt zur Dekade der Ozeane, welche die Vereinten Nationen ausgerufen haben, um bis 2030 die Erforschung und den Schutz der Weltmeere voranzutreiben. Es ist schon absurd, dass wir über die Oberfläche des Mondes besser Bescheid wissen als über den Grund unserer Meere. Denn während die Entnahme von ein paar Kilo Steinen, welche die Astronauten vom Mond mitbrachten, dem fernen Erdsatelliten kaum geschadet haben dürfte, richtete der Tiefseebergbau den Meeresgrund bereits übel zu.

Dabei steht die Erschließung gerade erst am Anfang. Es locken Erdöl, Erdgas, viele Metalle, darunter das begehrte Mangan, das sich für den Batteriebau und zur Durchhärtung von Stahl rapide steigender Nachfrage erfreut, sofern man hier von Freude reden kann. Schon vor Jahren hat eine Expedition mit der gleichnamigen Vorgängerin des hochmodernen Forschungsschiffes „Sonne“ vor den Küsten Perus die Folgen des Aberntens der Manganknollen im weichen Tiefseeboden dokumentiert. Das Leben dort ist zerstört, auf viele Jahrzehnte oder gar für immer. Die Trübungswolken aus dem aufgewirbelten Sediment können noch in dreißig Kilometern Entfernung Korallen und andere Meereslebewesen überdecken und ersticken. Diese Belastungen bürden wir den Ozeanen noch zusätzlich auf, nachdem wir ihnen mit Überfischung, Verlärmung, welche den selten gewordenen Walen die Kommunikation erschwert, Versauerung, Versenkung von Kriegswaffen, Chemikalien und all dem anderen Müll, Mikroplastik und Anstieg der durch den Klimawandel bedingten Wassertemperatur schon erheblich an die Substanz gegangen sind. Recht sorglos, ganz so, als ob die Meere für unsere Ernährung und das Weltklima keine Rolle spielten.

Man fühlt sich an das Schicksal der tropischen Wälder erinnert. Sie erschienen noch vor wenigen Jahrzehnten als unerschöpflich und, wie heißt es so ausdrucksstark, unkaputtbar. Bevor wir verstanden haben, wie sie funktionieren und wie bedeutsam sie für den Globus sind, hat ihre vorsichts- und rücksichtslose Ausbeutung Arten, Hoffnungen und Chancen zunichte gemacht. Wenn das Forschungsschiff „Sonne“ im Februar in den Hafen von Emden zurückkehrt, dürfte es reichlich wissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse an Bord haben, wie die Meere besser geschützt werden können. Allerdings zeigt sich an den Tropenwäldern wie auch an der mit dem Jahr 2020 zu Ende gegangenen „UN-Dekade biologische Vielfalt“, dass gesichertes Wissen nicht unbedingt das notwendige politische Handeln auslöst. Wider alle Vernunft.

### **Decision yet to be made on project's environment permit**

January 29, 2021, The National Business

ENVIRONMENT, Conservation and Climate Change Minister Wera Mori says a decision is yet to be made on the environmental permit for the Frieda River copper and gold project in West Sepik. Mori said the process in granting the permit had not been completed. “Frieda River is an ongoing project – meaning that PanAust, which has got the licence, is still conducting exploration,” he said. He said they were still assessing the ore body and the type and style of mineralisation needed before submitting their plan and mining development proposal to the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority and Mineral Resources Authority. “In the mining development plan they will submit, they will note the nature and style, the volume, and the mining rate (how much, in tonnes they are going to mine a year), together with the commercial mineral. From there, discussions will follow,” he said.

“At the moment, I have not issued any permit to anyone yet.” Mori said the Government would consider the inputs from East Sepik and West Sepik governments. “The people through their provincial governments will go through the process of discussions. “Meaningful discussions must take place between the people of East and West Sepik, whether they want the mine or not. “That is something for them to decide with their provincial leaders. “And then, we will talk to them. “We can’t do anything now. “All those processes are to be completed before an environment permit is granted. “There are no submissions yet, not that I know of.”

### **K9mil set for mine clean-up**

January 29, 2021, The National Business

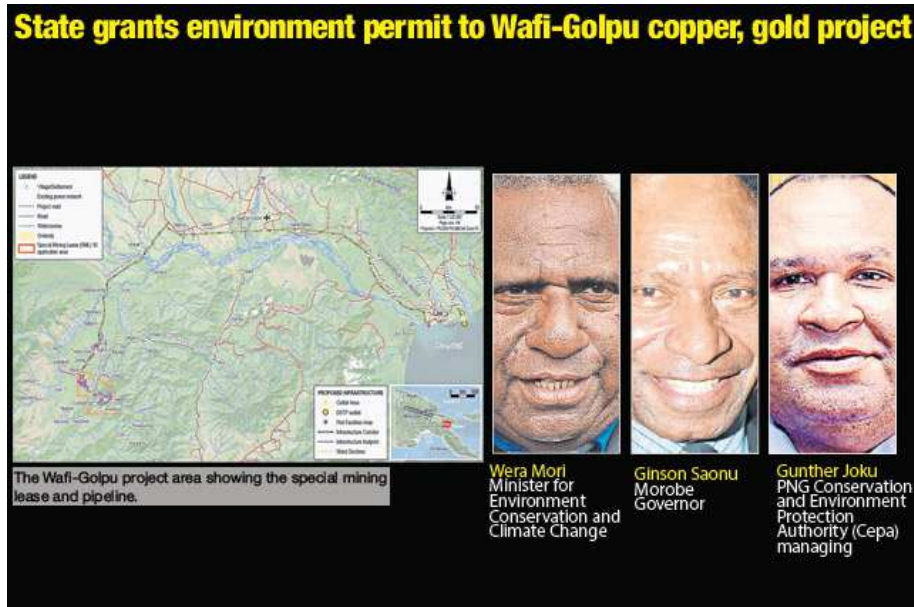
THE Government will spend about K9 million to clean up the toxic remains at the Sinivit mine in East New Britain left behind by developer Niugini Gold Ltd. Environment, Conservation and Climate Change Minister Wera Mori said the company left in 2014 without formally notifying the Government. It has claimed that the Government failed to renew its mining lease. Mori said he would be making a submission to Cabinet for funding to carry out the clean-up. “The mine was closed in 2014,” he said. “They abruptly left the camp and all the infrastructure, leaching facilities, the cyanide, dynamites and explosives. “These are very dangerous and must be disposed. “We need to clean the place up. “When the company left, they did not lodge a plan with the Mineral Resources Authority to put the camp under care and maintenance.

“As a result, we now have serious environmental issues. “We need a reputable company to detoxify the cyanide, including those kept in the vat ponds and remove them.” Mori said it would cost between K7.5 million and K9 million to undertake the exercise. He said it should take less than three months to clean up the waste. A population of about 50,000 people live close to the mine area. Mori said the company commenced gold and silver production in August 2007. They stopped production

at the end of June 2012. During its operation, the company's revenue from gold was K77, 297,238.06, while silver was K352, 833.49.

## Wafi-Golpu: K18bil project to start

By SHIRLEY MAULUDU, January 28, 2021 The National



THE construction phase of the K18.4 billion Wafi-Golpu copper and gold project in Morobe is set to begin after the Government granted it an environment permit yesterday. The construction phase alone, to be undertaken by the developers Harmony Gold Mining Company Limited and Newcrest Mining Limited, is expected to cost K17.26 million. “At this time when our economy is contracting, it is important that we must bring in a major project to (be a catalyst to) reviving the economy,” said Environment, Conservation and Climate Change Minister Wera Mori. “And there is no better project than Wafi-Golpu which on record is one of the biggest undeveloped copper and gold deposits in the world.” Mori announced yesterday that the project would be using the deep-sea tailings placement (DSTP) as its method of waste disposal.

However, the news was not received too well by the Morobe government led by Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu representing the landowner groups who have been against the DSTP disposal system. Mori said the project needed to get off the ground quickly to help revive the economy. “By law, the managing director of the Cepa (Gunther Joku), is required to grant the permit (after being satisfied that) all statutory processes involved in the granting of such permits are in place,” Mori said. “That includes the environmental impact studies to be conducted and specific environment statements to be made.” The deep-sea tailings method will be used. “It was as late as last year that as minister responsible for Cepa, I gave approval in principal for the permit to be granted so that it will start the process of moving towards a mine development contract for the Wafi-Golpu joint ventures,” he said.

“Upon the granting of a special mining lease, which forms part of the permitting processes of which we are now commencing with the environment permit, it will see an injection of close to US\$5 billion (K17.26bil) into the economy over five years for the construction of infrastructure.” The next phase after the granting of the permit is for the State Negotiating Team to discuss with the developers of the project the granting of a mine development contract. “The Morobe government and the people of Morobe will be represented through their elected leaders, to ensure that they gain maximum benefits from the spin-offs that are going to be generated,” he said. He said there was nothing

“sinister” about the granting of the permit. “It is a fulfilment of the requirements to take this project forward,” Mori said. “The mining lease cannot be granted without the environment permit. “Having satisfied all the statutory requirements for the granting of such, the managing director of the Ceba Gunther Joku was only fulfilling that obligation.”

### **Morobe govt firm on stand to oppose sea disposal method**

By GYNNIE KERO, January 28, 2021, The National National

THE Morobe government is not budging from its opposition to the deep sea placement tailings (DSTP) as the waste disposal method for the Wafi-Golpu copper and gold project. It was its initial reaction yesterday after Environment and Conservation Minister Wera Mori granted the K18.4 billion project an environment permit and announced that it would use the DSTP method. Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu could not be reached for a comment but legal counsel Ralph Saulep, on his behalf, told The National that the provincial government’s policy on the issue remained. “Yes to Wafi-Golpu, no to DSTP,” Saulep said. “Any attempt to force the DSTP on the people of Morobe will be met with vigorous challenge. “We also note that there are serious conditions in the permit which has been released and the public has been given 14 days to respond. “The 14 days is not yet up and therefore it is premature of the minister (Mori) to make such an announcement. “As one of the key stakeholders, the Governor (Saonu) should have been notified in advance. “That is a disappointment. “It’s only right if Saonu and the people of Morobe be given an opportunity to study the permit before they respond.”

### **Wafi-Golpu: Landowners want more consultations**

January 28, 2021, The National Business



Members of the district and local level governments in Morobe during the consultative meeting on the review of Morobe government’s position paper in Lae last week.  
—Nationalpics by JIMMY KALEBE



Landowners from the K18 billion Wafi-Golpu copper and gold mining project during the consultative meeting on the Morobe government’s position paper on the project last week.

By JIMMY KALEBE



LANDOWNERS of the K18 million Wafi-Golpu copper and gold mining project in Morobe want more consultations on the project before the green light is given to start. Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu said the provincial government would meet with them this week to have more discussions.



Landowners of the Wafi-Golpu project want more consultations before the project starts.

“The consultative meeting will give Morobe MPs who missed last week’s meeting on the review of the Morobe government’s position paper on the Wafi Golpu copper and gold mining project a chance to share their view,” he said.



Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu speaking during the Wafi-Golpu copper and gold mining project consultative meeting last week in Lae. – Nationalpic by LARRY ANDREW

Saonu said the MPs could also give their views through the provincial assembly meetings. There will also be discussions on the deep sea tailings placement (DSTP) and the incorporated land group (ILG) process. Saonu suggested that the province should negotiate on the project as one group and not as individual groups.



Landowners listening attentively during the consultative meeting on the Morobe government’s position paper on the project last week in Lae.

“It will serve the interest of the landowners and larger Morobe,” he said. Saonu urged Morobe’s nine MPs and landowner representatives to discuss with the provincial administration and provincial mining office critical issues to avoid situations which other mining communities around the country had been facing.

## Q4 revenue up by 37pc

January 28, 2021 The National Business



OIL Search Ltd has recorded a 2020 fourth quarter operating revenue of US\$259.5 million (K925.98mil) – an increase of 37 per cent from the third quarter. Managing director Dr Keiran Wulff said Oil Search had delivered another “solid quarter, resulting in record annual PNG LNG production against a backdrop of improving commodity prices”. “Our focus on performance, cost and capital allocation continued to deliver results in the fourth quarter,” he said. “We are embedding sustainable cost reduction initiatives and enhancing operations across the company to drive improved performance over the longer term. Our developments are also regaining momentum. “During the quarter, Parliament passed all remaining amendments to legislations for Papua LNG fiscal stability.

“Extensive assurance reviews were completed for the Pikka unit development and the project is ready to enter front-end engineering and design in early 2021. “Strong alignment has been achieved with our partner, Repsol, for the phased development program which is now targeting first oil in 2025 at 80,000 bopd from a single well pad. “Initial development costs have more than halved and the breakeven cost of supply under US\$40 (K142.73)/bbl makes the project resilient to lower oil prices. “Despite the material challenges of 2020, PNG LNG continued to outperform in the fourth quarter, ending the year with its highest ever annual production of 8.8 MT.

“The North West Moran oil field was also brought back online during the quarter following a shut-in due to the 2018 earthquake. “The re-commencement of production was a great effort by all involved and resulted in a gross contribution of around 2,500 bopd, notwithstanding remote operational challenges and the Covid-19 travel restrictions.” “Our resource position also continued to improve, with independently certified Alaska 2C contingent resources at 967.9 mmbbl (gross), representing a 94 per cent increase since asset acquisition.”

## Bougainville: Toroama refutes claims

January 28, 2021, The National

AUTONOMOUS Region of Bougainville President Ishmael Toroama has refuted claims by Panguna Tanku’urang chiefs that the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) supports their initiative to reopen the Panguna mine with the controversial Australia-based Caballus Mining Ltd.

Claims of the ABG's support were made by Vincent Bangki, the chairman and spokesman of splinter landowner group. Toroama said much of Bangki's claims were based on the ABG administration under former president John Momis. He said Momis initiated the Caballus deal with the landowners in Panguna. Controversy erupted in 2019 when Momis and senior members of his cabinet and acting chief secretary to the ABG Shadrach Himata, who was the ABG Mining secretary at the time, resolved to introduce an amendment in the Bougainville Mining Act 2015. This amendment would have granted Caballus Mining and its chief executive officer Jeff McGlenn unlimited control over Bougainville's minerals, including the Panguna Mine, which has more than US\$56 billion (K196.59bil) in unmined gold. The amendments were narrowly defeated on the floor of the ABG parliament.

## **Bougainville President rejects landowner group's Caballus idea**

Radio New Zealand on 28 January 2021

Bougainville's President has firmly rejected a claim that an Australian company, Caballus Mining, will operate the Panguna mine. Ishmael Toroama has released a statement in response to a landowner group, Panguna Tangkuúrang Chiefs, claiming that they'd given approval for Caballus.



The Panguna copper and gold mine in Bougainville was closed down for operations in 1989 at the start of the civil war. Photo: RNZ / Johnny Blades

The company had been in talks with the Autonomous Bougainville Government under former president John Momis regarding the potential re-opening of the large copper and gold mine. But Toroama has made a clear departure from any links with the company. He said the idea of Caballus operating a mine on Bougainville was shelved after their failed attempt to co-sponsor amendments to mining legislation with the former Momis administration. The President of the autonomous Papua New Guinea region said there was no current plan for a particular company to re-open the mine.

The Tangkuúrang Chiefs group, which does not represent all Panguna landowners, released a statement last week. "Today, we are very happy and honoured to announce that we have chosen Jeff McGlenn and Caballus Mining, based in Perth Western Australia to be our partner in re-opening Panguna Mine and as a direct result, rebuild Bougainville for all Bougainvilleans," the statement said. The Chiefs group said that Caballus was chosen after of a due diligence process, in which the ABG had on five separate occasions met with government officials and large corporations in Australia. But Toroama roundly dismissed this. "Let me make it clear that the current ABG under my Presidency is not in colluding with Caballus, RTZ, Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL) or any landowner group to redevelop the Panguna Mine at this time," Toroama said. "Statements by companies or landowner groups with a vested interest in Panguna who claim to be working with the

current ABG are false; we are not backing any company or any landowner group to reopen the mine." The president said his government was committed to protecting landowner rights from undue influence by persons wishing to reopen the mine.



Ismael Toroama Photo: Facebook



Access to Bougainville's Panguna copper mine is controlled by landowners. Vehicles going up to the mountainous mine area must first pass Morgan Junction checkpoint. Photo: Johnny Blades / RNZ Pacific

The controversial mine, which was the flashpoint which started a civil war that raged through much of the 1990s on Bougainville, was forced to close in 1989 as hostilities began. But the former operator of the mine, Bougainville Copper Limited, estimated in 2019 that there was \$US58 billion worth of mineral reserves still to be tapped. With an overwhelming majority of Bougainvilleans having voted for independence from PNG less than two years ago in a non-binding referendum, some Bougainvilleans see the re-opening of the mine as a natural step towards economic independence. However President Toroama cautioned that a moratorium remained in place over Panguna as well as the surrounding areas within the proximity of the mine. "The Panguna Mine remains a very sensitive issue on Bougainville and parties wishing to reopen it must maintain a sense of decorum," he said. Toroama said any company wishing to develop Bougainville's mineral resources be it Panguna or the exploration of a green field site must come through the proper channels.

## **Court grants miner leave to file for review**

Post-Courier, January 27, 2021

Barrick Niugini Ltd (BNL) has been given the nod to file a judicial review application challenging the recent decision of the State in granting the mining lease of the Porgera gold mine to Kumul Minerals Holding Ltd (KMHL). Lawyers assisting BNL, Ashurst Lawyers, obtained leave to file the judicial review application at the Waigani National Court yesterday. This means Barrick will file an application to review the decision of the Head of State, who acted on advice from the National Executive Council, dated August 25, 2020, purportedly under s.33 and 95E of the Mining Act to grant to KMHL a Special Mining Lease (SML) (No: 11) over the land situated in the Porgera valley for a term of 20 years. Barrick submitted that the process used for the granting of the subject mining lease did not comply with the Mining Act, citing reasons, including: KMHL was not the holder of an exploration license as is required under section 33;

There was no power in the Head of State to grant the subject lease because the land in question was the subject of an existing lease held by the plaintiff (Barrick), thereby contravening s.33; KMHL, as a State applicant, was only entitled to apply for grant under Part VA in respect of land "reserved" under s.95 but the land in question was not so reserved; The grant was made in breach of mandatory requirement, including consideration of objections and a Warden's hearing; and, The decision was made unfairly in that the landowners and the public were not given an opportunity to be heard as is required under s.59 of the Mining Act. Solicitor-General Tauvasa Tanuvasa, on behalf of the mining advisory council and the State, objected to Barrick's application by arguing that, pursuant to s.120, any challenge to the registration of a tenement could only be based on fraud, which Barrick failed to plead. However, presiding judge, Justice George Manuhu, in his ruling, found that the objection by Mr Tanuvasa for the State was misconceived. "I was not assisted with any case authority to support such proposition," Justice Manuhu said.

"Judicial review powers are primarily concerned with decision-making process, not allegations of fraud. "In any case, whether the plaintiff (Barrick) is prevented by s.120 to apply for a judicial review is a question of law that can only be determined in a substantive hearing. "As I have said, there is no case authority on point." Other arguments and objections by the State were that Barrick had no prima facie case and there was undue delay (five months), besides failing to exhaust administrative avenues and had no standing to make such an application. However, the judge found that Barrick demonstrated that it had an arguable case that warranted a grant of leave for a judicial review. "I am satisfied that the plaintiff (Barrick) has met all the requirements for the granting of leave to file an application for judicial review," Justice Manuhu said. "The application is granted in the terms of the draft orders."

## **Saonu denies signing permit for project**

January 27, 2021, The National Business

MOROBE Governor Ginson Saonu has denied claims that he had signed the environment permit for the Wafi-Golpu mine's deep sea tailings project. He said the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (Cepa) was the authorised government body to approve that. "There are a lot of rumours that I have signed the environmental permit," he said. "I want to make it clear that I have not signed the permit. "I was there as the Government (Prime Minister James Marape, Mining Minister Johnson Tuke) and Cepa, through its minister, signed the permit after the Government allowed it."

Saonu said the signing was done in principle to allow work to proceed so that it gave the developer the message that the Government had allowed work to continue, despite certain issues surrounding

its progress such as the waste management and landowner issues. The DSTP issue has been an ongoing one in the past two years. Coastline villagers are against the DSTP. The landowners are still organising themselves. The developer is also waiting. “That’s why the Government has to allow the signing so that the project can get off the ground for the developer to prepare itself,” Soanu said. “There will be room for negotiations, and the government will find ways with necessary technologies to deal with issues surrounding the mine, according to the people, the church and other concerned parties view.”

### **Miners avoiding taxes: Garry**

January 27, 2021, The National Business

MINERAL Resources Authority managing director Jerry Garry says it seems some operators of mining projects are avoiding paying corporate taxes. “It seems that many operators are shifting profits and eroding tax bases to avoid paying corporate tax income,” he said. Garry made the comments when commending K92 Mining Inc for paying K25 million in corporate tax to the Government despite being a relatively small mine compared to other mines in PNG. The company recently announced the payment of the tax for 2019/2020 following its commercial production. Garry said K92 Mining was a good example of how efficient and prudent management of any business could lead to profitable outputs resulting in the payment of taxes to the Government.

Garry said 2020 was a difficult year for business. “However, it all came down to how each organisation managed its business and it seems K92 Mine did exceptionally well in that respect,” he said. “This is the first time in the country for a junior miner to have paid this much money in taxes. “We encourage other mines in PNG to follow this remarkable example set by K92 mine.” Meanwhile, Garry also congratulated K92 Mining for being selected by the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada to receive the 2021 Thayer Lindsley Award. The award is for the discovery of the Kora North deposit by the company.

### **Project will lift economy**

By PETER ESILA, January 27, 2021 The National

THE Government needs to approve one of the major resource projects in the pipeline to help boost the ailing economy, an official says. Motor Vehicle Insurance Ltd (MVIL) managing director Michael Makap said in an economic review: “Once one of the projects gets over the line, for example the Papua LNG project (valued at US\$13 billion), we will experience a repeat of what happened during the (US\$19 billion) PNG LNG days. “If we can get at least one project going, I believe this will be the beginning of our recovery.” Makap echoed what experts on the economy around the country had been stressing to the Government in the past year, to approve one of the multi-billion kina projects such as the Papua LNG or the Wafi-Golpu projects to spark an economic revival.

It has also been suggested that re-opening the Porgera mine in Enga would immensely help the foreign exchange situation and the national economy in general. Makap said MVIL’s turnover was around K100 million per annum. “The 2020 results have indicated a significant reduction in revenue and halved our net profit compared to 2019,” he said. “The Covid-19 impacted us badly. “We had an exceptionally good year in 2019 where we paid our shareholders Kumul Consolidated Holdings Ltd a huge chunk of dividends. “But in 2020, the Covid-19 impacted us really badly, not so much in the Compulsory Third Party Insurance (which is) our core business, but in our investment income.” Prime Minister James Marape recently referred to MVIL as one of the few state companies which generated good returns.

## **Barrick challenges KMHL Tenement on Pogera**

Post-Courier, January 26, 2021

THE National court is expected to hand down a decision on whether Barrick (Niugini) Limited will be allowed to judicially review a decision of the Head of State, purportedly granting a Special Mining Lease (SML 11) to Kumul Mining's Holdings Limited (KMHL). Lawyers for Barrick Niugini Limited yesterday moved their application for leave to judicially review the purported decision before Justice George Manuhu. Among a number of grounds advanced by BNL the three main ones are: KMHL was not entitled to apply for or obtain the grant under section 33 of the Mining Act because it was not the holder of an exploration license over the land; there was no power on the part of the Head of State acting on advice under section 33 of the Mining Act to grant a special mining lease in respect of the land because it was the subject of an existing tenement:

KMHL was a "State Applicant" as that term is defined in section 2 of the Mining Act, and a State Applicant is only entitled to apply for a grant under Part VA of the Mining Act in respect of land "reserved" under section 95C of the Act, but the land was not reserved under section 95C of the Act. The State through the Solicitor General Tauvasa Tanuvasa vigorously opposed the application. By way of preliminary objection, the Solicitor General submitted that pursuant to section 120 of the Mining Act 1992, a tenement cannot be invalidated by reason of any alleged informality or irregularity except in the case of fraud. He further argued that the issue of whether or not the land the subject of SML 11 was validly reserved at the time of grant is critical. "If it was validly reserved then the requirements of the Mining Act were validly enlivened and KMHL was entitled to apply for, and be granted, SML 11." A decision will be handed down after lunch today.

## **Barker: Plans for gold needed**

January 26, 2021, The National Business

A feasibility study is needed to determine if the domestic processing of gold is viable or achievable in the time frame envisioned, an economist says. Responding to queries from *The National* on the possible establishment of a gold bullion bank in country, Institute of National Affairs executive director Paul Barker said any value-adding undertaken which creates local jobs was good but factors needed to be considered. "For gold, clearly there will not be a deterioration of the product over time or space so it's the other factors that must be borne in mind," he said. "In principle, as with domestic timber, hydrocarbon and agricultural processing, the more that can be achieved locally, the better it is for PNG. "But, as with other countries that export some raw materials in raw form, including Australia, it's often cheaper to process products overseas, where long established skills and gaining economies of scale are better achieved. "So, before venturing into local processing, it's necessary to conduct a professional feasibility study that's specific to that activity to ensure that it is viable and achievable, and within the time frame envisaged."

## **Position review on Wafi-Golpu mine project vital, says Saonu**

Post-Courier, January 26, 2021

Morobe provincial government's position on Wafi-Golpu mining project remains with a review underway to capture all other views before a memorandum of agreement discussion with the national government. Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu was responding to Bulolo MP and Deputy Prime Minister Sam Basil's call to halt the delivery of the finalised Morobe Position Paper. Mr Saonu said Deputy PM Basil comments on the province position paper is acknowledged but as a province, they cannot afford any further delays to the mining project. He said MPG has hosted a consultative workshop on the review of Morobe provincial government's position paper on Wafi-Golpu mining

project last week with concern stakeholders from the impacted districts, local level governments of Huon Gulf, Lae and Bulolo, including landowners of special mining lease, deep sea tailing placement and pipeline.

“Since landowners want more consultation directly with MPG, we will meet with them this week and we also welcome national members to join us in this meeting so they can discuss and give their views to be considered in the final paper as well. “In the review consultative meeting last week, we had more than 200 participants and this week will be strictly for landowners to present their positions,” he said. Mr Saonu admitted delaying interests of some people, but stated that he will not rush the position of the provincial government until he is satisfied that all issues and concerns are addressed. “This will not stop us and I thank landowner groups, LLG presidents and ward members from impacted districts for their participation as I want the province to negotiate with the government as one group and not a disintegrated group.

“My only interest is in the interest of the direct landowners and the larger Morobe, so the process is still continuing,” he said. Mr Saonu urged leaders and landowner representatives to feel free to discuss with him, the administration and mining division on any issues as this was a critical moment. “Any unnecessary delay will jeopardise the process of the project development, and I call on MP Basil, Morobe MPs including stakeholders to work closely with our office. “Let us avoid too much media talk and work together so we can ensure no one is left behind in this important project,” Mr Saonu said.

### **Invest wisely, landowners told**

January 26, 2021, The National Business

LANDOWNERS of the Wafi-Golpu copper and gold mining project in Morobe have to learn from other mining communities to avoid making mistakes, says Governor Ginson Saonu. He told last week’s Morobe government’s review of the position paper for the Wafi Golpu project that landowners should lift their living standards when the mine development started. “You don’t have to get benefits from this project and think that these benefits will last forever,” he said. “It will one day come to a stop. “So when you get those benefits, start doing something positive to secure your future. Soanu addressed landowners at the meeting to review the Morobe government’s position paper on the project on Friday. He also said no new mining licences would be issued in the province. “We have to see the outcomes of Wafi-Golpu first before thinking of developing another new mine (if any) in the province,” he said. He expects the special mining lease for Wafi-Golpu to be granted around the middle of this year. Morobe administrator Bart Ipambonj said the actual construction of the mine was approaching. “The project is sure to give benefits to all and with the review done on the position paper, the province must change when the mining starts,” he said.

### **Basil slams position paper on Wafi-Golpu**

Post-Courier, January 25, 2021

Member for Bulolo Sam Basil believes that the position paper on Wafi Golpu mining project in Morobe Province has been hijacked by Governor Ginson Saonu. Mr Basil said he is calling for a halt in the delivery of the finalised Morobe Position Paper. He said the position paper needs all key stakeholders from the landowners in the main ore body and the processing plant area including Yanta and Hengambu in Mumeng LLG of Bulolo District; and Buaf of Wampar LLG in Huon Gulf, cascading to pipeline landowners in Ahi LLG in Lae District, and expanding to outlying districts of Morobe. Mr Basil said this after him and his colleague member for Houn Gulf Ross Seymour and two other landowner associations from Yanta and Hengambu not at the final day of consultations



last week in Lae. “As Deputy Prime Minister in charge of economic matters and Minister for Commerce and Industry, I support the Prime Minister on the need to expedite Wafi Golphu Mining Project. That support for me, means that all stakeholders must work together in an open, transparent and accountable way to deliver this vital project,” he said.

“We have had enough delays due to differences and mudslinging. It is now time to lay those aside and work together so we can deliver this key project.” Mr Basil now has called for a halt on delivery the finalised Morobe Position Paper saying this is not a finalised position paper as does not represent everyone. “Any entertainment of this position paper will backfire and result in further unnecessary delays to Wafi-Golpu project. I am calling on the Governor to give one week notice to all key stakeholders including key Morobe Provincial Administration officials, Dr Boeha and Dr Kameatu, landowners’ executives and their advisors, Wampar and Mumeng LLG presidents to meet, consider and approve this before it is labelled a finalised Morobe Position Paper,” he said. Meanwhile, Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu maintained that the position paper will capture the views of all landowners who need to make it known to the provincial government. He called for landowners and all parties to not delay the project with criticism regarding the mining project.

### **Sheppard’s arrest was politically motivated, lawyer says**

By KARO JESSE, January 25, 2021, *The National*

LAST week’s arrest of Greg Sheppard, of Young and Williams Lawyers, was politically motivated, a fellow lawyer says. Sheppard was arrested on Wednesday for allegedly involved in a fraud of K268 million belonging to Western province people’s dividends community mine continuation agreement trust funds. He was charged with two counts each of conspiracy and obtaining money by false pretence. Sheppard was later released on a K3,000 bail. Lawyer Philip Tabuchi, a partner in the firm, told *The National* that the charges would be vigorously defended because it was politically-driven due to the Government’s failure in court. Tabuchi claimed that Sheppard was arrested after he successfully fought on behalf of the OK Tedi Fly River Development Foundation Ltd (OTFRDF) and reclaimed funds from the Government, which belonged to the people of the polluted region in Western whose lives were devastated by the OK Tedi mine. “After our successful litigation, we obtained court orders which allowed our client (OTFRDF) to take control of these funds” he said.

“We have acted under the instruction of our client at all times and all transactions have been in accordance with the court order. “Young and Williams is the only major law firm in PNG that does not work for the Government, and as such, we are one of the law firms willing to take legal action against the Government on behalf of clients.” A statement released by the Office of the Police Commissioner, David Manning, stated that the special police forensic criminal investigators alleged that two transactions totalling K52 million were paid to Young and Williams Lawyers’ account and three transactions of K216 million paid into the OTFRDF account. Comm Manning said investigations were continuing and other suspects would be brought in for inquiry into their involvement in the alleged fraud. The statement further stated that there would be a detailed forensic investigation into the appointments of the OTFRDF directors, the expenditure of the K268 million which police claimed was not authorised by the trust and bank accounts held by the foundation’s directors and Young and Williams. These include forwarding proceeds from the K268 million to personal bank accounts of OTFRDF directors or employees.

## **Probe into trust funds continues**

January 25, 2021, *The National*

INVESTIGATIONS into Western people's dividends trust, also known as the community mine continuation agreement (CMCA) trust funds of K268 million, continue as more information comes to hand, Police Commissioner David Manning says. He told *The National* that investigators weren't far off from making another arrest. So far, two people have been arrested and charged for alleged theft and misappropriation of K268 million belonging to the fund. "It's an ongoing investigation and once we have more information, we move on to the next phase and bring in the suspects and process them," Comm Manning said. "We shouldn't be far off, depending on the collection of the evidence." A special police forensic and criminal investigation team led by Comm Manning are working on the case. It is alleged that the secretary and directors of the Ok Tedi Fly River Development Foundation Ltd were misappropriated. "The misappropriated CMCA trust funds were intended to fund and implement development projects for CMCA communities in Western," Comm Manning said.

"The use and management of CMCA trust funds are guided by the trust instrument underpinning the CMCA trust account and are not to be used for any other purpose. "However, the investigation, established that the funds were diverted and paid to a certain law firm, a company owned by the foundation's secretary, specific directors' personal bank accounts and other companies between Aug 2018 and early 2020. "The CMCA trust account was initially under the custody of the State through its nominee, the board of trustees. "The four signatories of the foundation purporting to represent the interest of 147,000-plus people originating from 158 villages within the CMCA corridor in Western, accessed the CMCA trust account and withdrew a total of K268 million between Aug 2018 and Feb 2020 and deposited them into non-trust, non-interest-bearing bank accounts (of) a certain law firm and (accounts) that the foundation held with different commercial banks," Comm Manning claimed.

## **Wafi-Golpu on track for licencing, says Tuke**

BY MELISHA YAFOI, Post-Courier, January 22, 2021

MINING Minister Johnson Tuke says the Wafi-Golpu mining project will be licensed by the end of July or early August this year. He told the Post-Courier yesterday that he is adamant that Wafi-Golpu will get off the ground by the second quarter of this year. Mr Tuke said a framework agreement has already been reached and that is why there is no point proposing another time and the best time to give the licence is in July or August of this year. "I am very sure, adamant and optimistic that they will get the licence this year. "The environment permit has been granted and that supersedes all the agreements, but in the course of the activity, then we can be able to piggyback on what the government has issued and we can be able to mitigate through," he said. Mr Tuke said there is no other way to deal with mine waste, it is deep sea tailings and maintained that the environment permit has already been issued, so the project will go on.

He said they have gone through all the relevant processes with all parties involved in discussions including court. "Now we are set to fast-track and move forward in the production of the license for Wafi. "All due diligence have been done, proponents are very happy and we are very happy, we are set to go...the environment permit has been given so perhaps my sealing time is as I am not looking for more than August. At the end of July and August I should grant the license and I am stubborn hearted to deliver that. "I am perfectly sure that for Wafi I will deliver the license by the first week of August or last week of July." Meanwhile he said for Porgera, the issue is still before the court however, they are still working on a clause in the mining development contract.

## Australian lawyer charged over major fraud in PNG

*A high-profile Australian lawyer has been arrested in Papua New Guinea in relation to alleged theft of landowner development funds. Radio New Zealand on 22 January 2021*



Greg Sheppard (centre) working as a lawyer in Port Moresby, representing PNG opposition leader Belden Namah  
Photo: Loop PNG

Greg Sheppard of Young & Williams Lawyers was arrested yesterday in Port Moresby, interviewed and taken into custody, charged with two counts of conspiracy and another two count of false pretense. PNG's police commissioner David Manning said the charges relate to alleged misappropriation of around \$US74.5 million from a landowner development fund in Western Province. The Western Province People's Dividends Community Mine Continuation Agreement Trust Funds are based on dividends from landowners' 10 percent equity in the Ok Tedi hold and copper mine. A statement from Manning linked the misappropriation to transactions paid into the Young & Williams Lawyers' account and that of Ok Tedi Fly River Development Foundation Limited. In the past week police arrested a Western Province woman in relation to the misappropriation case. Sheppard has done extensive work in PNG over recent years, representing the former Prime Minister Peter O'Neill and Opposition Leader Belden Namah among other prominent leaders. Meanwhile, Manning said the work of forensic accounting specialists and detectives in the PNG Constabulary is working effectively in identifying and deterring fraud of such significant magnitude.

## MP: Don't politicise project

January 20, 2021, The National Business

THE Wafi-Golpu copper-gold project in Morobe should not be politicised, Governor Ginson Saonu says. He addressed a three-day consultative meeting in Lae on the review of the Morobe government's position paper on the Wafi Golpu project. The review will have the views of the provincial government, the nine districts of Morobe including local level government (LLG) from impacted areas, landowner from Babuaf, Hengambu, Yanta and the pipeline landowners. Saonu warned that the discussions should not be politicised or on self-interests but based on common interests. "This review will allow people, landowners and the provincial government to freely discuss and share ideas and not to be manipulated," Saonu said. He said the meeting would capture areas in the reviewed position paper that would give a much clearer picture to the Government and the developer on Morobe's stand. Saonu said the project was critical for the country and the province would like

to see a mining development forum happen soon. “We are aiming that once everything is in order, the special mining lease should be granted by June this year and the project to start,” he said.

### **K92 mine paid K25mil as tax**

January 19, 2021, The National Business

THE K92 Mining Inc paid K25 million as corporate tax for 2019/2020 following its commercial production. K92 Mining is the operator of Kainantu gold mine in Eastern Highlands. Senior vice-president operations Warren Uyen made this known to a Morobe government delegation, led by Governor Ginson Saonu, who visited the project site on Friday. He said the Covid-19 had also impacted the mine’s operation. “The Covid-19 measures were taken seriously and the employees now seem to manage it well,” he said. “Testing and quarantine facilities recognised by the Government (standard) were set up at the mine.” Uyen said 2020 was a big year for the project with a lot of construction for its infrastructure. The mine got some new equipment last January for its expansion. Roads were extended to facilitate the big trucks that were brought in and additional accommodation was built to cater for the increasing number of employees. Since it is an underground mine, they had to drill a lot of holes for better discovery. Meanwhile, the miner is currently in talks with Mineral Resources Authority on the future of the tailings. A suggestion is to put tailings back into the drilled hole (underground).

### **Tension high in New Caledonia over Vale sale**

Radio New Zealand on 18 January 2021

There is continued high tension in New Caledonia over the planned sale of the Vale nickel plant to a new consortium Prony Resources. Pro-independence parties are firmly opposed to the deal, which is expected to be finalised next month, rejecting any role of the Swiss commodity trader Trafigura among the future stakeholders.



Photo: AFP

The plant was the target of arson attacks last month and is under police surveillance, pending further developments. Opponents to the sale plan want the Brazilian-owned plant to go into local ownership, saying the plant and its resources should serve the territory's development and not be used by others to plunder. The anti-independence side has accused the pro-independence FLNKS

movement of staging a coup with its protests aimed at bringing New Caledonia to its knees. It has called on the French state to re-establish order, describing the FLNKS actions as terrorism.

### **Miner expects K700mil profit**

January 15, 2021, The National Business

OK Tedi Mining Ltd (OTML) says it expects to report a profit of US\$200 million (K700.40mil) (unaudited) for 2020 despite the challenges that year. The company said it expected to release its 2020 full year report later in the year. The company also clarified that the US\$100 million loss reported in The National yesterday was the estimated impact of the damages caused by a fire that occurred at the mine site and that it had not made a loss in its 2020 annual report. “OTML expects a profit after tax of more than US\$200 million (unaudited) for 2020 despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the impact of the fire late last December of 2020,” the company said.

“As of last Wednesday, ore processing has commenced at one of the two processing circuits (SAG-1) which was impacted by the fire incident after significant remedial work was completed. “The other processing circuit (SAG-1), which sustained severe damages as a result of the fire incident is expected to be operational by late January.” It said a dedicated team worked tirelessly over the Christmas and New Year period to conduct much-needed repairs to get the processing circuit operational. The remedial work for SAG 2 took almost 10,000 man hours. “An investigation report into the cause of the fire incident and the recommended actions to prevent a re-occurrence was submitted to the chief inspector of mines who has given us the approval to re-commence operation after careful deliberation and assessment of the report.”

### **Campaign against deep sea mining continues**

Post-Courier, January 14, 2021

THE campaign against deep sea mining in the Bismarck Sea by the Alliance of Solwara Warriors (ASW) still continues. Concerned citizens, who make up the alliance in East New Britain and New Ireland provinces, declared this in Kokopo this week. The team represents other concerned stakeholders and thousands of communities in the New Guinea Islands region, Milne Bay, Bougainville, Madang and other coastal provinces in the northern mainland. Team leader Jonathan Mesulam said they want the government and everyone to know that the campaign is ongoing and they are the face of the people in the wards that will be affected. He said, to date the government has not cancelled all the licences of Nautilus and made a public statement so that everyone is aware and assured that the mining company is totally gone.

“We know that in 2018, Nautilus went away due to some reasons unknown but, last year, we learnt that there is a new company known as Deep Green Finance Limited here to continue with explorations project,” said Mr Mesulam. “The name Nautilus is gone but the workers are still here working under this new company and that is why we want to make it clear that our position still stands and we are still against it.” He said they launched two objections – objection e12537 last year and objection e11196 in 2018 – and the Mineral Resources Authority (MRA) is yet to respond to them. “The group is also plaintiff in a case before the courts against MRA and the state regarding the issuing of licence. “The reason behind the case is for MRA and the state to release the documents as these are public documents so that everyone must know what is really happening,” said Mr Mesulam.

## Ok Tedi: Police probe missing K268mil

January 14, 2021, The National

POLICE are investigating the K268 million missing from a landowner trust account, with one woman already facing 15 counts relating to fraud-related charges. Police Commissioner David Manning said they were looking for three men to be questioned over the missing funds from the Western province people's dividends trust account. He said police believed that those who benefited included companies, company directors and individuals. The dividends trust account also known as the Community Mine Continuation Agreement (CMCA) Trust Funds was initially under the custody of the State through the secretaries of four government departments. "Investigations continue into the alleged misappropriation and theft of K268 million from the trust fund which is said to have been withdrawn and misused over two years after a change of signatories of the trust fund in 2018," Manning said. A special police forensic and criminal investigation team has already charged a woman after a complaint was lodged by North Fly MP James Donald.

Manning said the woman was arrested and brought to Port Moresby on Monday. She was charged with 15 counts of obtaining money by false pretences, conspiracy and misappropriation. Manning said the funds were supposed to benefit the 147,000-plus people from 158 villages in the Community Mine Continuation Agreement corridor in Western who had been complaining that they had not seen any development projects in the area. "The use and management of CMCA Trust Funds are guided by the trust instrument underpinning the CMCA Trust Account and not to be used for any other purpose," Manning said. He said initial police investigation showed that payments had been made to a certain law firm, a company and others between August 2018 and early 2020. The CMCA Trust Account was initially under the custody of the Government through a board of trustees. But Manning said the State's board of trustees was replaced by representatives of the Ok Tedi Fly River Development Foundation Ltd.

## K305mil loss for Ok Tedi

By DALE LUMA, January 14, 2021, The National Business



Operations ongoing at the Ok Tedi mine site.  
- Picture supplied

THE Ok Tedi Mining Ltd (OTML) is projecting a revenue loss of US\$100 million (K305.63mil) for last year. It blamed a fire at its plant site for the 10 per cent loss of its annual revenue at the end of last year. A spokesperson told The National that its full year production was impacted by the fire resulting in the loss of production days for two to three weeks. But the company met its shipping

commitments for the month and that shipments for the remainder of the year will not be impacted. “The number of shipments we make over the course of a year varies depending on production and the size of the customer parcels,” the spokesperson said. “At an annual production rate of 400Ktpa (kilo tonnes per annum) of copper concentrate, and with export parcels usually being between 10Kt and 20Kt, we generally make between 20 and 40 export shipments a year.

“As of Jan 6, power supply to the SAG-2 Flotation circuit was restored after significant remedial work was completed. “The other processing circuit (SAG-1), which sustained severe damage as a result of the fire is expected to be operational by late (this month). An investigation report into the cause of the fire and recommended actions to prevent a recurrence was submitted to the chief inspector of mines who has given us the approval to re-commence operation after careful deliberation and assessment of the report.” The company expects a loss in revenue to be around US\$100 million at current metal prices. “Revenue generated by the mine has approximated US\$1 billion (K3.5bil) in recent years,” the spokesperson said. “Therefore, US\$100 million is in the order of 10 per cent of our normal annual revenue.”

### **Ok Tedi: Woman arrested for embezzling K268 million**

Post-Courier, January 14, 2021

A WOMAN director of the Ok Tedi Fly River Development Foundation Limited (OTFRDF) has been arrested and charged for misappropriating K268 million belonging to the Western Province People’s Dividends Trust account, also known as the Community Mine Continuation Agreement (CMCA) trust funds held with ANZ bank. Edna Oai, a 45-year-old from South Fly district in Western, was picked up from Daru on Monday (January 11) and flown to Port Moresby, where she was formally charged with 15 counts of false pretence, conspiracy and misappropriation. Police Commissioner, David Manning, who is the head of the special police forensic and criminal investigation team, in a statement said the team comprising of police detectives, a forensic accounting specialist and legal counsels started investigating the matter in October. The investigation was conducted based on a formal complaint lodged by the North Fly MP, James Donald, with the office of Police Commissioner.

Mrs Oai has been refused police bail, due to the seriousness of the offences. It is alleged that a significant amount of money was misappropriated by the defendant, the secretary and directors of the Ok Tedi Development Foundation. The misappropriated trust funds were intended to fund and implement development projects for CMCA communities in Western Province. The use and management of the funds are guided by the trust instrument underpinning the CMCA trust account and are not to be used for any other purpose. The investigation established that the funds were diverted and paid to a certain law firm, a firm owned by the secretary of the foundation, specific directors’ personal bank accounts and other firms between August 2018 and early 2020. The trust account was initially under the custody of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea through its nominee board of trustees (BOT).

The State’s trustees were replaced by representatives of the foundation, including chairman Steven Bagari, chief executive officer Samson Jubi and directors Abel Darugo and suspect Oai as the new signatories to the trust account in August 2018. The four signatories of foundation, purporting to represent the interest of the more than 147,000 people in the 158 villages within CMCA corridor in Western, accessed the account and withdrew K268 million between August 2018 and February 2020 and deposited them into non-trust, non-interest-bearing bank accounts belonging to a certain law firm and the foundation held with different commercial banks. The investigation team discovered that the people of the CMCA corridor have been complaining that no single development project has been funded and implemented in communities from trust funds.

Police are continuing investigations and are seeking the former and current directors of the foundation to come forward and assist with information regarding the misappropriation of the K268m. Police noted that the requirements of the company Act 1997, such as preparation and lodgment of annual returns and financial statements for financial years covering 2016 to 2020 were not complied with. Further inquiries will be undertaken to determine if the firm has complied with other statutory requirements such as payment of taxes to Internal Revenue Commission. Police ascertained that the foundation's board of directors comprised individuals who were improperly appointed. The election of the leaders is normally conducted by officials from the Electoral Commission and witnessed by representatives from the foundation, Ok Tedi Mining Limited, ward members, church, women's and children's groups and other interested stakeholders.

## Europe's Largest Oil Producer Bets Big On Deep-Sea Mining

By Felicity Bradstock - Jan 13, 2021, oilprice.com

In a shift away from fossil fuels, Norway is planning to deep dive for metals as part of its plan for a greener future. Having gained most of the country's wealth from its successful oil industry, Norway is now looking to get ahead of the curve in metals by mining copper, zinc and other metals found on the seabed. The deep-sea mining project, [expected to commence in late 2023](#), will see metals mined for use in electric vehicle batteries, wind turbines and solar farms. However, environmentalists worry that disturbing the seabed could wreak environmental havoc. Huge polymetallic nodules - manganese, nickel, copper and cobalt - on the seabed are attractive to those trying to adapt to new technologies and move away from traditional energies such as oil and coal. But [ocean experts are concerned about the environmental impact](#) of deep-sea mining as it has not been done before, and the potential repercussions are still unknown.

Reducing worldwide reliance on fossil fuels will require alternatives to be developed. Ditching oil and gas would mean using [billions of kilograms of metal](#) to fuel wind turbines and electric car batteries. For example, a wind turbine requires around a metric tonne of copper to work.

At present, many of these metals come from terrestrial mines, which has led to deforestation and water pollution. Mining from the sea-bed, around 3 kilometres underwater, could provide a less harmful extraction option as global demand for these metals increases.

While the UN's International Seabed Authority (ISA), established in 1994, has deemed deep-sea resources "common heritage of mankind" in recent years it has allotted 30 exploration contracts across an area of 1.4 million square kilometres. These contracts have been delivered to both private companies and governments, with the aim of developing these metallic resources. In response to environmental concerns, the Norwegian government plans to carry out an environmental impact assessment, after which the matter will go to vote in parliament in 2023. Norway presents an exception to ISA regulations as its metals are not in international waters. According to recent studies, Norway's waters contain large quantities of these valuable metals. Higher estimates suggest the Norwegian continental shelf could provide as much as 21.7 million tonnes of copper and 22.7 million tonnes of zinc; figures well over the world's annual output.

If estimates are correct, Norway could see an annual revenue of up to \$20 billion in metal mining within the next 30 years. While the country's oil and gas industries contributed \$61 billion in revenue in 2019, this is not insignificant as Norway adapts to greener energy practices. This week, Oil and Energy Minister Tina Bru told Reuters "We are moving forward on this, and the momentum is high", explaining "This is an industry with great potential.". Cyprus-based Seabird Exploration plans to develop a deep-sea mining subsidiary, to be registered with the Euronext Growth Oslo small-cap stock exchange this year. The company aims to use existing oil and gas sector techniques



to extract metals from the seabed by the late 2020s. Nordic Mining is also expected to request mining licenses if the plans go ahead.

Several other countries [already hold contracts for seabed exploration](#) including Germany, China, South Korea, Brazil, Russia, and Japan. And others are highly interested in getting involved as regulators call for greener energy practices. Some of the countries that have so far shown interest include Poland, India, France, the UK, Belgian, Singapore, and the Pacific islands of Kiribati, Cook Islands, Tonga, and Nauru.

However, many of these countries must rely on the ISA to grant permissions for exploration following a full environmental impact assessment of the area in question. This could significantly delay hopes of mining, as well as hinder development plans if the assessment deems the potential impact too high. Following recent interest in metal extraction from the world's seabeds by several countries across the globe, as well as the increase in contracts issued by the ISA, it seems inevitable that mining will go ahead. The question now is when will this mining take place and what the environmental impact of the extraction will be in practice as we move into a "greener future".

### **New Ireland calls for fair share of benefits from Lihir mine**

January 14, 2021, The National Business

THE New Ireland government has called for a fairer distribution of benefits from the Lihir gold mine. Governor Sir Julius Chan, in a meeting with new Newcrest Mining's new general-manager Peter Sharpe yesterday, asked why the province was not getting its fair share of profits since the rise in gold prices. "We are not asking for much, just be fair by distributing the super profit with all stakeholders, including the State and landowners and the province which is providing the wealth," he said. According to the provincial government, one of the ongoing demands had also been to ensure the construction of a ring road around Lihir Island. Sharpe confirmed that the scope of work was with the National Planning Department for approval for work to start with tax credit funds. However, the New Ireland Government said consultation should have been sought with its team before tax credit funds were used to fund any projects. "The provincial executive council and the legislative assembly has appointed community rep Clement Mosson as chairman of works and infrastructure and, as a Lihirian, he will monitor works on the island," Sir Julius said. Newcrest has agreed to have more open dialogue with the provincial government.

### **New proposal mooted in New Caledonia nickel plant sale**

Radio New Zealand on 11 January 2021

The president of New Caledonia's Southern Province has made a fresh suggestion on how to structure a purchase of the Vale nickel plant. Speaking on television, Sonia Backes said New Caledonian shareholders should hold 51 percent while the stake of the Swiss commodity trader Trafigura be reduced to less than 20 percent. The tentative sale to a newly formed consortium, Prony Resources, which includes Trafigura, was widely resisted last year and led to protests, which culminated in arson attacks at the Vale plant. Opponents wanted Sofinor of the Northern Province to become the owner in partnership with Korea Zinc, but Vale rejected the bid. Ms Backes's proposal comes as further talks are planned on the Vale plant's future. Thousands of jobs are at risk if the site is mothballed or closed.

## **Basil gives update on Morobe mining projects**

January 11, 2021, The National

MOROBE hosts two major mining projects, one in production and the other upcoming, and a challenging factor to these projects is the high cost of electricity, Commerce and Industry Minister Sam Basil says. Basil, who is also Bulolo MP and Deputy Prime Minister, said this during a session with the Lae Chamber of Commerce and Industry members on Wednesday. Basil said other projects such as Frieda mine in the East and West Sepik, Papua LNG in Gulf, Winzu, Pasca and other impact projects in other parts of Papua New Guinea required great amounts of energy to power up these investments to increase productions levels and the returns. “As Deputy Prime Minister responsible for economic matters, I will be pushing our Government to look into how best we can provide affordable energy for these new and existing investments,” he said.

“Naturally, Lae chamber members, especially those in manufacturing, will welcome cheaper electricity. “I know Papua New Guineans at large will appreciate cheaper and quality goods if cheaper energy savings are passed on.” Basil said a short neighbourhood scan, of Australia and Indonesia, showed that they were increasing rather than reducing their carbon emissions by using coal-fired electricity with existing and potential carbon emissions that dwarfed emissions if PNG embarks on cheaper energy using coal as part of its energy mix. He said he would push for coal to be included as part of PNG’s energy mix, complementing hydro, gas, diesel, biomass and other energy forms within the Marape Government.

## **SPECIAL REPORT: PT Freeport Indonesia and its tail of violations in Papua: human, labour and environmental rights.** West Papua Netzwerk 6 January 2021

Indigene Stämme wie die Kamoro und die Amungme beklagen, dass ihre Gemeinschaften von Armut, Gewalt und vor allem Umweltzerstörung betroffen sind, seit die von PT Freeport Indonesia betriebene Grasberg-Mine vor 48 Jahren ihre Aktivitäten aufgenommen hat. Um dieses kritische Thema erneut ins Rampenlicht zu rücken, hat die International Coalition for Papua (ICP) zusammen mit der Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), der Initiative Action for Ecology and Peoples' Emancipation (AEER), dem Center for Study, Documentation and Advocacy on Peoples' Rights (PUSAKA), Friends of the Earth Papua (WALHI Papua) das Lokataru Law and Human Rights Office, INTERPRT, TAPOL, VIVAT International, dem Westpapua-Netzwerk (WPN), Geneva for Human Rights (GHR) und Franciscans International (FI) einen neuen Sonderbericht mit dem Titel "PT Freeport Indonesia and its tail of violations in Papua: human, labour and environmental rights" veröffentlicht. Die 27-seitige Publikation behandelt detaillierte Aspekte verschiedener Menschenrechtsverletzungen, in die die indonesische Tochtergesellschaft von Freeport-McMoRan, PT Freeport Indonesia, in den letzten Jahren verwickelt war.

Quelle: [https://www.humanrightspapua.org/images/docs/PT Freeport Indo tail of violations in Papua Dec20.pdf](https://www.humanrightspapua.org/images/docs/PT%20Freeport%20Indo%20tail%20of%20violations%20in%20Papua%20Dec20.pdf)

## **Frieda mine: Be respectful, people told**

January 6, 2021, The National Business

EAST Sepik Governor Allan Bird has urged people in the province to respect and speak with understanding and tolerance when discussing the proposed US\$8 billion (K28bil) Frieda River gold and copper project. Bird yesterday wrote on his Facebook page that many people were getting upset and talking about the Frieda mine proposal on social media as if it was a foregone conclusion. “That is not the case, there are many issues surrounding Frieda that remain unresolved,” he said. “Frieda is a very challenging and difficult project, not only because it has the potential to destroy the last

remaining major river system in the world, but also because of its economics, unstable terrain and the chemistry of the ore body itself. “We keep making reference to Ok Tedi and then we assume that the Government is ready to repeat the same mistakes. “I don’t think that is the case.

“The Ok Tedi decision was taken at a time when the world did not care about climate change or environmental impact. “We live in a very different world today. “Therefore, I appeal to the people from Sepik, especially East Sepik, to respect every comment and speak with understanding and tolerance. “I do not believe there is a company in the world that will risk their reputation and stock price to build and operate an unsafe mine. “And I do not believe the Government of James Marape, whose people suffered a catastrophic earthquake and are yet to see the benefits of their own gas and oil wealth, will rush blindly into making any decision that will negatively impact our people.

“I am also very confident that our friends in West Sepik are also concerned about the safety of the Sepik River as we are. “Remember, the headwaters of the Sepik are in Telefomin. “So let’s be more tolerant, respectful and understanding as we discuss this very important issue that affects us all.” The Sandaun government last December presented its environmental impact statement to the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority. In that statement, the local government was against the construction of an integrated storage facility or hydro tailings dam built to cater for waste. Governor Tony Wouwou said this was because of the enormous environmental and social implications it would have if the dam collapsed.

Wouwou, however, said the province was in favour of the mine going ahead but proposed that a deep sea tailings placement be built. He said other alternative waste management options needed to be considered such as identifying a site suitable for the sole purpose of a tailings dam. Environment Minister Wera Mori previously said he wanted to speak with the governors and administrations of East and West Sepik about how they could collectively move the Frieda River project forward. “Developments can take place but it also must be done with the mutual understanding of both East and West Sepik,” he said. “The potential impact of the Sepik River must be taken into account.”

### **Protecting environment, locals in project areas vital: Barker**

January 6, 2021, The National Business

SAFEGUARDING natural resources and opportunities for people in resource project areas is important, says an economist. PNG Institute of National Affairs director Paul Barker said, in his 2021 economic outlook that it needed open discussion on priorities, including through mechanisms, such as the current national land use planning exercise. “It includes the need for an open forum to help determine the right balance over what resources, business activities and jobs should be restricted exclusively for Papua New Guineans in future, while also encouraging foreign investment and competition to bring in needed capital needed for local job creation, specific skills and quality goods and services,” he said.

Barker said it entailed realistic balance, including emphasis on education, training and standards to help fill the gaps. “Clearly industries requiring major capital and locally unavailable technology/skills require international investment and human resources,” he said. “But for other industries in resource management, neither the State nor private investors has the capital or experience for the level of investment needed to develop opportunities and generate jobs for young Papua New Guineans. “So foreign investment restrictions should not be unduly onerous, while foreign employment restrictions should be more rigorously and transparently applied. “Greater informational and data cooperation is also required between respective authorities to ensure compliance and application of tax and other obligations.”

## Economist calls for transparent talks in sector

January 6, 2021 The National Business

THE need to review and update fiscal arrangement in the resource sector is apparent, said PNG Institute of National Affairs director Paul Barker. In his 2021 economic outlook, Barker said that constructive dialogue with the industry and project investors/operators was required. “Review and updates also for individual projects when their licenses fell due for review or renewal, but this needed to be conducted in an open and orderly manner, avoiding undue disruption,” he said. “Constructive dialogue with the State using sound international reviews and evidence, and not being pushed about or spoon-fed. “However, the art of making a good deal requires a readiness for compromise, unless there are very good grounds for not doing so, such as if the project is of marginal benefit, or can be advantageously deferred or rescheduled, rather than having multiple new projects simultaneously.

“Clearly, the costs or risks (including environmental) for some projects may be excessive and the Government fully justified in rejecting or deferring them, at least until better knowledge or technology is available.” Barker said in 2019 and 2020, the Government’s stand seemed “unduly rigid over some prospective resource projects, seen as potentially providing a substantial economic stimulus impact, but most notably with the Porgera mine”. “Unlike other projects, the Porgera mine was a long-operating mine in a remote part of the Highlands, in which the State had once held a significant equity, which was subsequently sold, except the province’s small but valuable share, together with the landowners’. “The investors were ready to improve the State’s and local equity and other benefits, and robust negotiations were certainly justified, but unfortunately the State’s demand seemed excessive and unduly rigid, and failed to appreciate the extent of economic and social benefits and revenue provided by the mine.”

## Study at Porgera gold mine shows benefits of treating tailings with lime

Valentina Ruiz Leotaud, MiningCom, December 13, 2020



Study co-author Joshua Fisher (lower right) collecting water samples from treated mine tailings. (Image courtesy Joshua Fisher – Columbia University).

A [study](#) conducted at the Porgera gold mine in Papua New Guinea showed that treating mine tailings with lime helped stabilize arsenic in soil and sediments around the mine, therefore preventing the toxic chemical from remaining dissolved in water and affecting people and ecosystems.

To understand how this sequestration process works, researchers from Australia and the US examined how pH and climate patterns, specifically wetting and drying cycles, impact arsenic capture and storage.

Given the tropical climate of the Porgera Watershed, the study also tested the impacts of wetting and drying the mine tailings that had been treated with lime. These tests indicated that the treated mine wastes rapidly released arsenic during rewetting, but the amount of arsenic released from the wastes decreased over time following repeated wetting and drying cycles. The Porgera Joint Venture owns the Porgera Mine, which is operated by Barrick (Niugini) Limited. The results of this scientific work were published in the journal *Applied Geochemistry* and they state that the Porgera Joint Venture should continue to treat tailings with lime to reduce arsenic mobility in the watershed.

The lime for neutralization at Porgera comes from a lime plant located 7 kilometres away from the mine site. Water, on the other hand, is supplied from a reservoir at the Waile Creek containing 7 million cubic meters of water. The findings in the study are considered timely, as just two months ago [Porgera was allowed to re-open](#) after the James Marape administration and Barrick Gold reached a deal, following months of negotiations and legal battles. Operations at Porgera had been suspended since April when its mining lease expired and was not renewed by the government, whose top figure was demanding a greater share of Papua New Guinea's resources wealth.



The Porgera mine in Papua New Guinea. (Image courtesy of [Barrick Gold](#).)

Porgera is located in the north-central Enga province at an altitude of 2,200 – 2,700 metres. Since its first gold pour in 1990, the mine has seen more than 143 million tonnes of ore being extracted from both the open pit and the underground operations, for a total output of over 20 million ounces of gold reported to date. The Porgera Joint Venture owns the Porgera Mine which is operated by Barrick (Niugini) Limited which, in turn, owns 95% of the PJV while the remaining 5% is owned by Mineral Resource Enga, which is a consortium between the Enga Provincial Government (2.5%) and the Porgera landowners (2.5%). Incorporated as an independently managed company in Papua New Guinea, Barrick (Niugini) Limited is jointly owned through an equal partnership between Barrick Gold Corporation (47.5%) and Zijin Mining Group (47.5%).