

## Stranded ship off Kudat damages corals, turtles' site

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**KUDAT:** A stranded cargo ship on a shallow reef off Kalamunian island here on Sunday has damaged corals, which are the foraging area of the protected Green and Hawksbill sea turtles.

Blue Fin Surf and Dive founder Ivan Tan said the vessel, which had been stranded for the past two days due to a faulty navigational device, however missed encroaching into the "Nemo Point" dive site.

"It has ploughed through, creating a new channel. The vessel had definitely caused damage to the corals," he said, adding that divers, including himself, in-

spected the site on Monday.

On Sunday, Tan had told the *New Straits Times* that he was shocked to see the vessel coming to rest on top of the corals, located in shallow waters, when he took guests for snorkelling about 9am.

He said a similar incident had occurred in the late 1970s or 1980s, but this time the incident could have had a more serious impact on the coral reefs and turtles.

"We are hoping that restoration work will be conducted at the affected area immediately, as corals take between five and 10

years to grow."

"Based on a study by Universiti Malaysia Sabah, the damage to the area could prove to have a severe impact on the sea turtle population in the area and those originating from other areas of the region," said Kudat Turtle Conservation Society chairperson Sofia Johari.

The Kudat waters are part of 898,762.76ha of the Tun Mustapha Park, which has unique biodiversity supporting a series of complex and linked habitats.

It is also home to endangered species such as green turtles and dugongs.