

# PRESS CUTTINGS

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Malaysia to quench its thirst with underground water reserves

Unesco geoparks may become one

Tourists could move between Langkawi and Satun parks with ease

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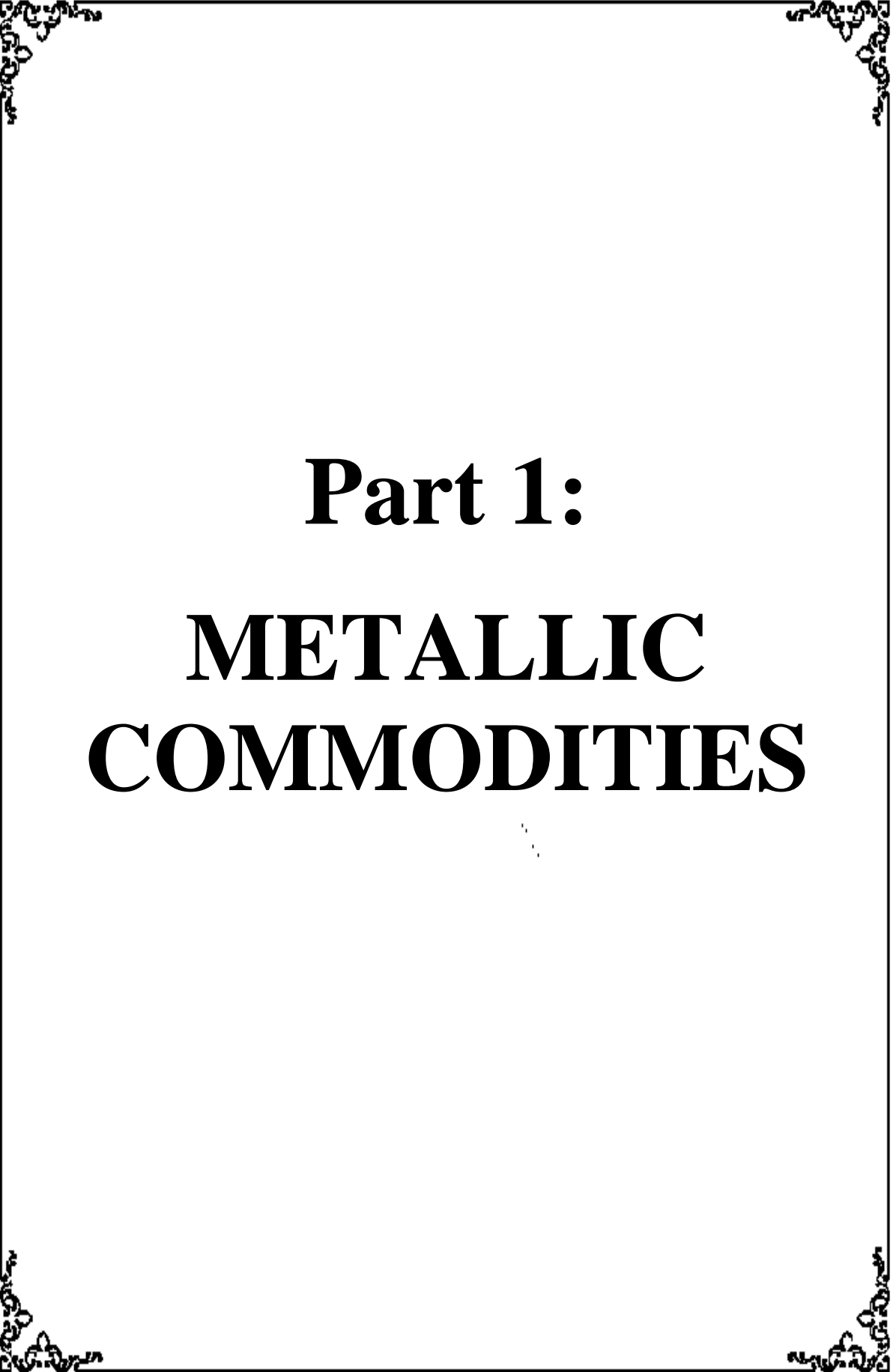
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**Part 1:**

**METALLIC  
COMMODITIES**

## Gold bull run halted by trade war truce

SINGAPORE: Gold opened the third quarter with a slump back below US\$1,400 (RM5,789) an ounce after the US and China agreed to a truce in their trade war, dealing a blow for now to havens that were bolstered in recent months by the long-running tensions as well as prospects for looser monetary policy.

Prices fell after Donald Trump and Xi Jinping's meeting over the weekend, at which the leaders of the two largest economies agreed to resume negotiations. Still, the setback may be temporary as investors now train their focus on US jobs data due Friday for clues on the Federal Reserve's next move on policy.

Bullion hit a six-year high last week as the trade war dragged on, top central banks including the Fed adopted a more dovish tone, and tensions spiked between the United States and Iran. Driven by speculation that US interest rates may soon be headed lower,

investors plowed into bullion-backed exchange-traded funds, which swelled 5% in June, the most since 2016.

"Certainly this morning, we're seeing some weakness," Daniel Hynes, commodity strategist at Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd, told Bloomberg Television.

"But I do think the outlook for rates in the United States in particular has been a real driving force. So we're quite positive toward gold, we think this abatement in the US dollar strength and potential rate cuts in the near term will certainly continue to boost investment demand," he said.

Spot gold dropped as much as 1.8%, the biggest intra-day fall in a year, to US\$1,384.06 an ounce, and was at US\$1,386.65 at 7:07 am in London. Prices hit US\$1,439.21 on June 25, the highest since 2013, and rallied 8% last month. A gauge of the US dollar rose 0.2% yesterday after sagging 1.6% in June.

After meeting Xi, Trump said he would hold off imposing additional tariffs on Chinese imports and delay restrictions against Huawei Technologies Co, letting US companies resume sales to China's largest telecommunications equipment maker. Further details on the deal were light though, and markets are still pricing in an interest rate cut at the Fed's policy meeting this month.

"Nervousness could take ground soon enough if talks fail to take form of a concrete deal," Mumbai-based Kotak Securities Ltd said in a note.

Still, gold remained under pressure yesterday on improved risk sentiment, with downside seen at US\$1,380, with further falls dependent on the dollar strengthening more, according to Kotak.

In other precious metals, spot silver fell 1%, platinum was little changed and palladium was 0.4% higher. — Bloomberg

Source : Starbiz

Date : 03 July 2019 (Wednesday)

## Semiconductor sales data point to 'signs of life', analysts say

**NEW YORK:** The latest data on semiconductor sales is pointing to stabilisation in the industry, suggesting that months of weakness and tepid demand could be nearing an end, analysts said on Monday.

According to the Semiconductor Industry Association, total monthly sales came in at US\$33bil in May, up 7.1% from April. While the May data represented a year-over-year decline of 14.5%, it also represented a moderation from the 17.7% drop in April.

"While the industry is still working through a cycle, the y/y declines appear to be decelerating," wrote Mitch Steves, an analyst at RBC Capital Markets.

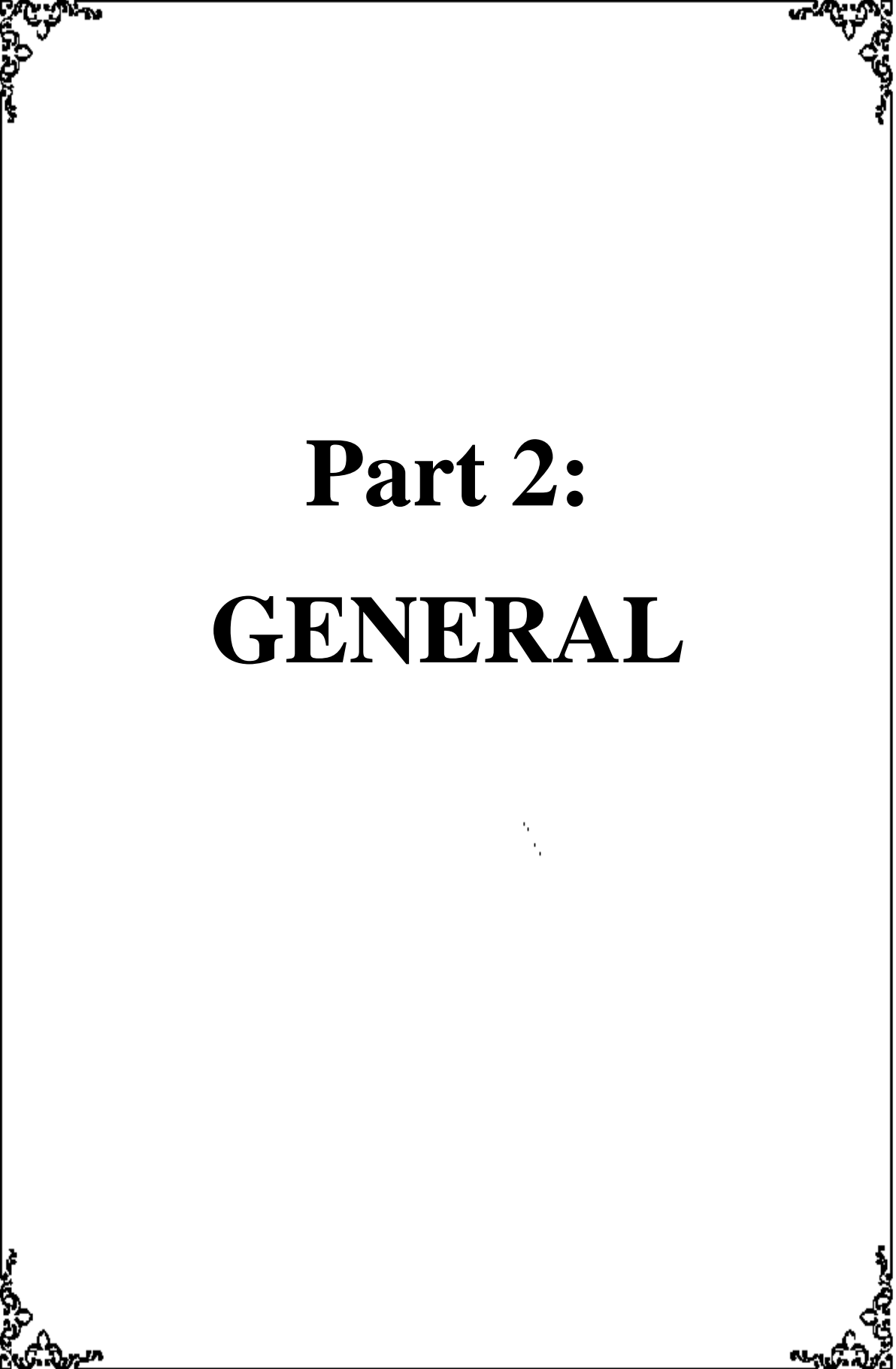
"Given that forecasts were cut during a period where sentiment was heavily negative, we think there is upside bias to the numbers expected for 2019/2020."

The data comes at a time when analysts have been concerned about the prospects for the industry in the second half of the year, especially since the Philadelphia Semiconductor Index is within 7% of record levels. A number of companies, notably Broadcom Inc and Micron Technology Inc, have issued cautious outlooks in recent weeks.

Morgan Stanley wrote that the data pointed to "some signs of life" after "an exceptionally weak April," and noted that sales – along with the product categories of micro, logic and memory chips – came in ahead of its expectations. However, analyst Joseph Moore maintained his cautious view on the sector, seeing "very challenging industry conditions" despite the data.

The data was also above Citi's estimate, according to analyst Christopher Danelly, who raised his full-year semiconductor sales forecast to \$413.3 billion from \$408.2 billion. The outlook represents a full-year decline of 12%, compared with a previous view of down 13%.

The Philadelphia Semiconductor Index rose as much as 5% on Monday, though it last traded up 2% on the day. The day's rally came as the US and China declared a truce in their trade war over the weekend. — Bloomberg



# Part 2:

# GENERAL

# Unesco geoparks may become one

## Tourists could move between Langkawi and Satun parks with ease

By **ARNOLD LOH**  
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**LANGKAWI:** Malaysia and Thailand may soon share the honour of caring for two 550-million-year-old assets joined as one.

The Langkawi Development Authority (Lada) will discuss with Satun province to merge the Unesco Global Geoparks (UGG) on both sides into one.

"As the first transnational UGG in

Asia, tourists exploring this natural wonder will be able to move between Langkawi and Satun with the least hassle," said Lada chief executive officer Dr Hezri Adnan.

He said he has passed this request to Unesco, adding that he will meet the Satun governor next month on the matter.

There are only four transnational UGGs in the world, spanning across the borders of Austria and Slovenia; Hungary and Slovakia, and the

United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

Langkawi won its UGG status in 2007 while Satun got it just last year.

Dr Hezri said both geoparks were actually formed at the same time, during a massive tectonic event that split apart the old supercontinent Pangea 550 million years ago.

Visitors can view one of the massive granitic boulders that was once a part of Pangea at the new-

ly-opened Langkawi Garden of Rainbows and Butterflies near Telaga Harbour Park.

A single boulder measuring over 45m across was partly unearthed and is now a feature of the garden.

"Geologically speaking, the Satun and Langkawi geoparks are one and the same.

"Our lands share the same ancient history," he added.

By merging, he said both sides will share the duties of conserva-

tion, managed development and promotion.

He said the cross-border attraction will significantly boost Langkawi's tourism industry and that tourists from around the world will be able to immerse themselves in the natural wonders and cultures of both places with minimum immigration hassle.

Travel time by ferry between Langkawi and Satun geoparks are one and a half hours.

## Move to get Kinta Valley recognised as Unesco site

**IPOH:** Work has started on getting the Kinta Valley National Geopark recognised as a Unesco Global Geopark site.

Some 135 people from various universities, government departments and non-governmental organisations have begun a multi-faceted scientific research expedition at Gunung Korbu to collect data to be used when applying for the status.

The week-long expedition was flagged off yesterday near the Sultan Azlan Shah dam in Ulu Kinta here.

Perak Mineral and Geoscience Department director Datuk Ahmad Zukni Ahmad Khalil said the expedition was the first step to get Kinta Valley recognised.

"Gunung Korbu is just one of 18 sites under the Kinta Valley National Geopark.

"And to date, there has been no research published on Gunung Korbu and the expedition will hopefully bring back some data that could add value to the dossier when applying for the status," he said.

Ahmad Zukni said participants in the expedition will collect data on geology, biology, water quality, culture and for recreation purposes.

"We will present the results at a scientific seminar scheduled next year.

"Our department will also produce research books based on data collected from this expedition," he added.

Source : The Star  
Date : 03 July 2019 (Wednesday)

## Malaysia to quench its thirst with underground water reserves

By WANI MUTHIAH  
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**SHAH ALAM:** Malaysia will be able to weather dry spells and droughts with its huge amounts of yet-to-be extracted underground water, says Water, Land and Natural Resources Minister Dr Xavier Jayakumar.

Malaysia is blessed with some

five trillion cubic metres of groundwater, he said.

"The only thing is that we are not sure yet where (these reserves) are concentrated," Dr Xavier told a press conference after launching the inaugural National Groundwater Conference 2019 here yesterday.

He said Malaysia was set to use Japanese technology to map its underground water sources.

But he pointed out other issues, including regulations needed to be in place before underground water could be extracted for use.

"We don't have the regulations in place and so we are, at the same time, also regulating and formulating laws that need to be put into place as far as underground water usage is concerned," he added.

Dr Xavier said Malaysia had

turned to Japan for help because the country had expertise in extracting underground water.

During a visit to Japan, Dr Xavier said he found there were cities there wholly using underground water for household, farming and industrial needs.

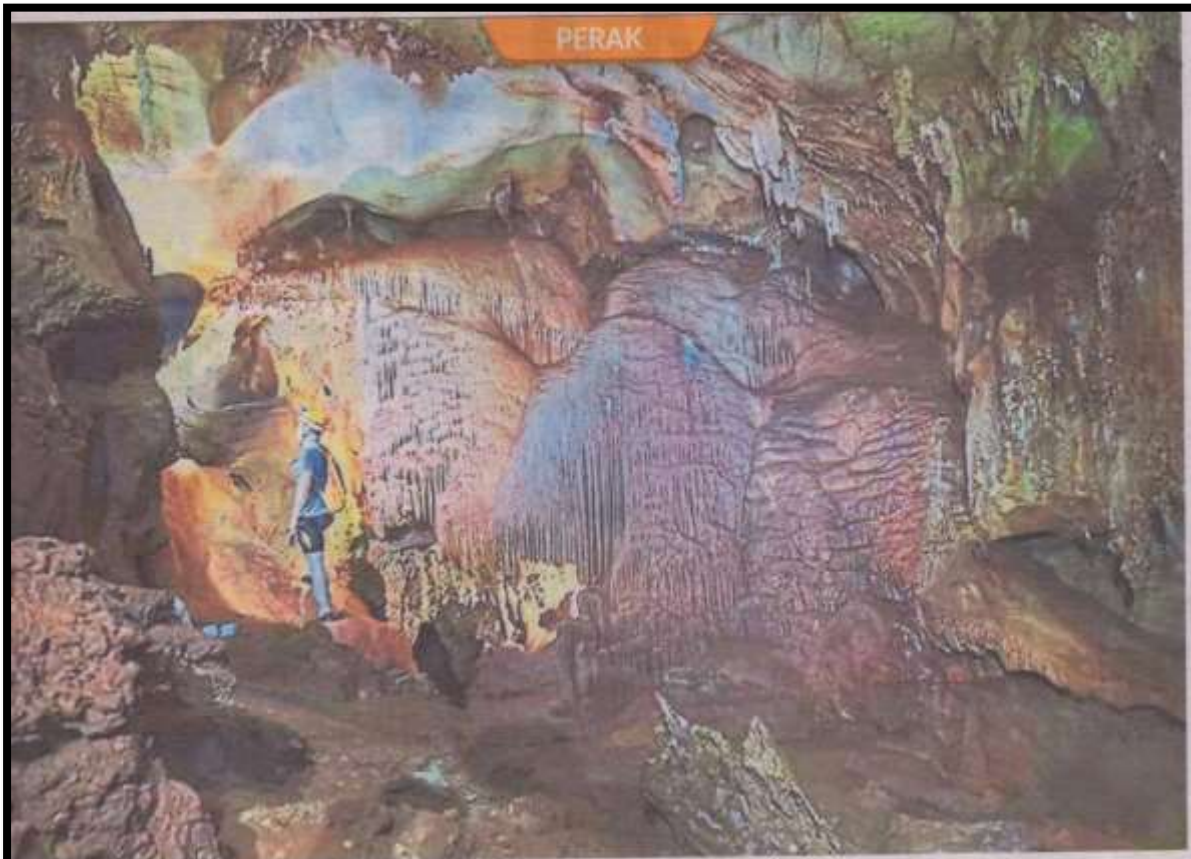
He said the government wanted sustainable underground water use and Malaysia was in a position to

use the best practices available.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Xavier said only a tiny fraction of Malaysia's massive amount of underground water was being used, with the bulk of the nation's supply coming from surface water.

"Denmark has 100% groundwater utilisation, Austria 98%, Thailand 80%, China 78%, USA 50%, but Malaysia has less than 3%," he said.





There is an urgent need to preserve Gunung Lanno, say caving enthusiasts.

## 'Gazette hills to protect them for perpetuity'

Limestone formations should be made forest reserves to save them from quarry activities, say environmentalists

By IVAN LOH and ILI AQILAH  
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NATURE lovers are urging the Perak government to gazette limestone hills in the state as protected areas similar to a permanent forest reserve.

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) field officer Meor Razak Meor Abdul Rahman said the ecological, scientific and heritage value of such sites must be preserved.

"In Gopeng's Gunung Gajah,

there is a species of tree known as "Hopea bilitonensis" or commonly called *merawan batu kapur*."

"It is listed by the Switzerland-based International Union for Conservation of Nature as critically endangered."

"But the hill is on state land and quarry activities are taking place nearby," he pointed out.

Meor Razak was commenting on caving enthusiasts' calls for the state government to protect the Gunung Lanno limestone hill in

Simpang Pulai.

It was reported on July 5 that rock blasting activities at nearby quarries were threatening these sites.

It was learned that State Tourism Committee chairman Tan Kar Hing had requested some of the quarries to halt their rock blasting activities to enable scientific studies to be carried out in the area.

He was also quoted as having asked the state Minerals and

Geoscience Department and Perak State Park Corporation to visit the caves.

Meor Razak said there were sustainable ways to generate revenue without having to destroy nature.

"The state should invite more researchers to conduct studies at these locations," he suggested.

"When they come, they will usually bring in a team and could stay for months, thereby boosting business for local homestays and eateries."

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# Rock blasting threatening beautiful hidden caves

By IVAN LOH  
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**IPOH:** Hidden in Gunung Lanno, Simpang Pulai are several caves with amazing scenery and findings.

A group of caving enthusiasts has been exploring these sites since May last year and has found some things worthy of being tourism attractions and for scientific research.

One of them, Ching Boon Tat, however, said these locations were being threatened by rock blasting activities at quarry sites near the hill.

"What we found were beautiful. Each cave has its own special identity. Among these is Gua Air, a watery stream that leads to an open area

hills.  
range-looking crystal



**Natural wonder:** Gua Air is one of the caves where a water tunnel leads to an open area surrounded by hills at Gunung Lanno, Simpang Pulai.

The report which appeared in *The Star* on July 5.

He said Perak State Park Corporation had confirmed to him that Gunung Lanno was part of the Kinta Valley National Geopark.

He explained that although Kinta Valley was declared a national geopark by the Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah last year, it did not mean it would be protected from quarry activities.

"There is a difference. If it is gazetted, there will be documents on its management and protection, similar to how our forest reserves are protected," he added.

Meor Razak said it was ironic that in Ipoh, which is known for its limestone caves, none of these sites were gazetted as state parks or forest reserves.

"The only area in the country with limestone that is part of a protected site is the Perlis State Park, on the Nakawan Range," he noted.

After referring to the Ipoh Local Plan, Meor Razak discovered that some of the limestone hills here had been designated as quarry zones or for quarry-based industries.

"The quarry companies have valid licences so their activities cannot be stopped immediately without suitable compensation from the state government, and that may be an issue.

"Although the government has the right to take back the land for the benefit of the public, it may not be a viable option either as the quarries are a revenue stream for the state," he added.

Kumpulan Aktivis Sahabat Alam (Kuasa) president Hafizudin

Nasarudin agreed that Gunung Lanno should be gazetted.

He said this would be one way to stop quarry and rock blasting activities.

"They should categorise Gunung Lanno as virgin jungle reserve, research forest, state park forest or wildlife forest.

"The Forestry Department or the state park corporation should determine which category best fits the hill," he said.

Hafizudin said the state government should set up a committee to protect forests, hills and mountains in Perak.

"Together with other environmental groups, we had asked the Perak Mentri Besar to do so with members comprising experts, local communities and environmental activists.

"The committee would be able to make recommendations on areas deemed suitable for development and other commercial activities.

"Sadly, we have not received any response," he said, adding that something must be done urgently before Gunung Lanno's 36 caves were destroyed.

Hafizudin said as Gunung Lanno was on state-owned land, it should not be difficult for the government to gazette and protect the area.

"It would be sad if the state chooses to do nothing to preserve Gunung Lanno when it can generate income for the state through eco-tourism.

"We do not have many amazing limestone caves left, therefore it is important to protect the present ones," he added.



Gua Air is one of the many beautiful caves at Gunung Lanno.



A rock formation that looks like a tortoise in Gunung Lanno.



A wall drawing found in one of the caves at Gunung Lanno, Simpang Pulai.



Meor Razak said more research should be conducted on limestone hills.

(Left) An aerial view of quarry activities at Gunung Lanno in Singang Pulau.

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by;



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