



## KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

SURAT KHABAR	:	THE STAR - Views			
TARIKH	:	13/8/2021 (JUMAAT)	MUKA SURAT	:	12
JABATAN	:	JMG			

## Good reasons to preserve Gunung Kanthan

GUNUNG Kanthan, located in the Kinta Valley National Geopark, is in danger of losing its priceless archaeological, palaeontological, biological, cultural and tourism values due to commercialism if the state government goes ahead in issuing a permit to quarry Zone C of the limestone massif.

Gunung Kanthan is a potential treasure trove of archaeological and palaeontological sites because many such sites in Peninsular Malaysia are associated with limestone caves.

In 2005, the prehistory unit of the Department of Museums and Antiquities found a pottery fragment, probably from the Neolithic period, in one of the caves.

Another example is the Neolithic paintings found at the Gunung Panjang limestone hill in Tambun on the outskirts of Ipoh. The paintings, dated back to between 2,000 and 5,000 years ago, were discovered in 1959.

In 2019, vertebrate palaeontologist Lim Tze Tshen reported that he found fossils of orang utan in Kanthan Cave and Jelapang. He said that he also unearthed fossils of other mammals, including wild cattle, wild boar, deer, porcupine and hippopotamus from caves in Perak.

Gunung Kanthan is also home to critically endangered, endemic plants such as *Meiogyne kanthanensis*, *Gymnostachyum kanthan-*



*ense*, and *Vatica kanthanensis*, and fauna such as the prehistoric trapdoor spider (*Liphistius kanthan*) and the bent-toed gecko (*Cyrtodactylus guakanthanensis*).

It was also identified as "the only remnant of limestone forest in Perak" with a population of birds, reptiles, frogs and the endangered serow, known to locals as kambing gurun.

In 2016, scientists from Universiti Malaysia Sabah and Rimba (a non-profit research group) conducted a large-scale survey of land snails at 12 limestone hills in Perak under a grant provid-

ed by the quarry operator Lafarge Malaysia.

A total of 122 species of land snails were recorded and 34 of these were described as "unique to one of the hills surveyed". About 30 were described as "potentially new to science".

There have been suggestions for limestone to be quarried from idle mining land or to conduct subsurface quarrying instead of blasting the karst.

Lafarge Malaysia had commissioned Petronas University to conduct a feasibility study on subsurface limestone quarrying. The

results, presented in 2020 at an international conference in Kuala Lumpur, showed that subsurface quarrying is indeed feasible.

In 2015, Ramli Mohd Osman, a senior research officer at the Mineral Research Centre, pointed out that there are 21 billion tonnes of sub-surface limestone reserves that can be mined without destroying Perak's hills.

The Mineral Research Centre is an agency under the Minerals and Geoscience Department, which was set up after the merger of the Department of Geological Survey and the Mines Department in 1999.

Consumers Association of Penang would like to ask the Perak state government to explain why it is allowing the destruction of limestone hills that are iconic to Ipoh if limestone can be sourced from below the ground, as experts have pointed out. Is it because blasting the hills is the most cost-effective way to obtain the material?

The state government should be held accountable for the destruction of the limestone hills and the resultant damage to the environment because it is responsible for issuing quarrying permits.

**MOHIDEEN ABDUL KADEER**  
President  
Consumers Association of  
Penang