

# PRESS CUTTINGS

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**Gold soars as flu scare spurs safe-haven bids**

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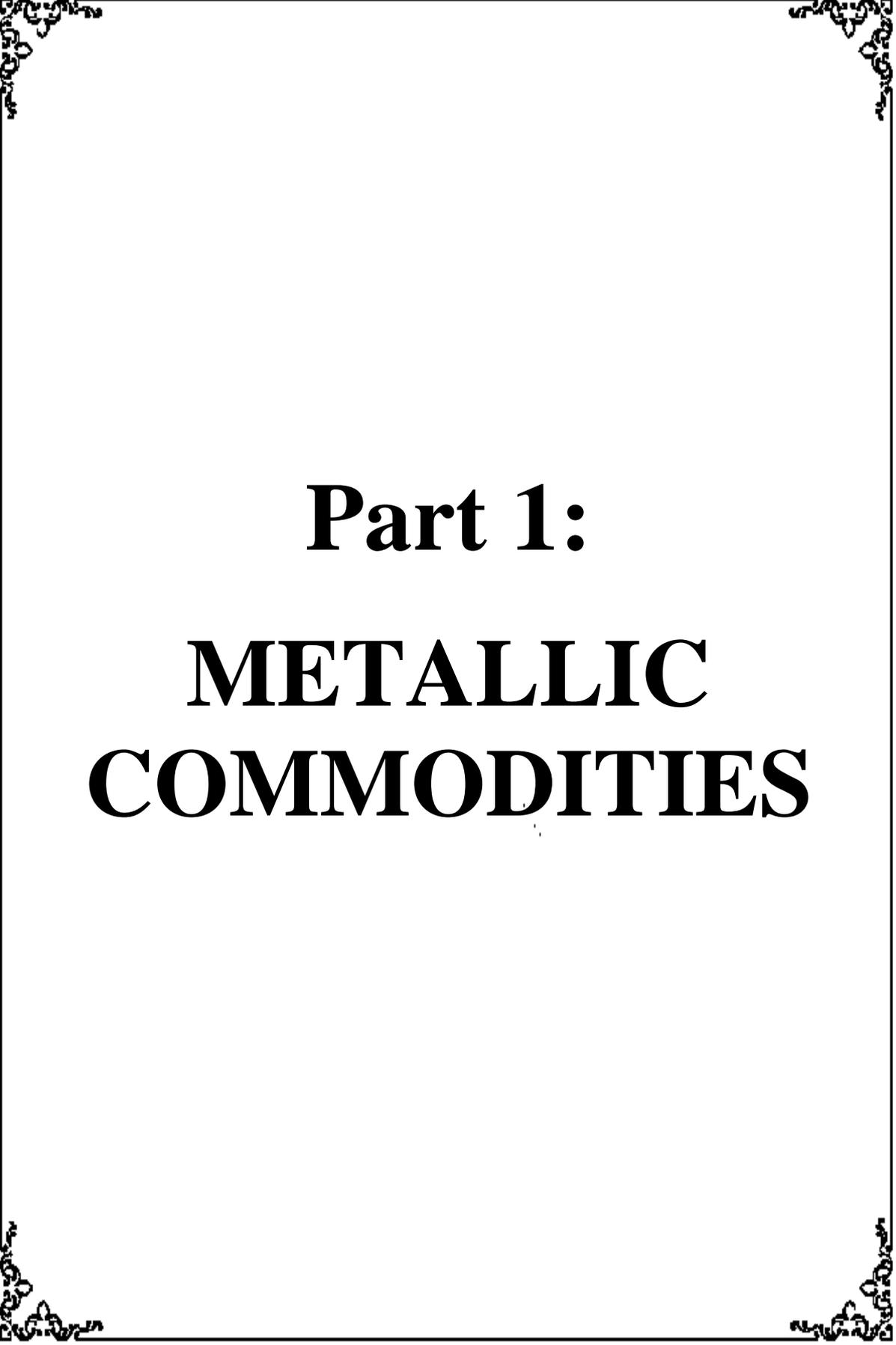
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**Part 1:**

**METALLIC  
COMMODITIES**

# ETFs, hedge funds pile into platinum

## Investors starting to like precious metal on brightening outlook

**NEW YORK:** Investors have taken a shine to platinum.

Long-only exchange-traded funds focused on the precious metal used to curb emissions from diesel cars attracted US\$850mil this year through Monday, the biggest annual inflow. Hedge funds and other large speculators boosted their bullish bets on platinum to the highest in more than three years.

Platinum has fallen out of favour among investors after Volkswagen AG's emissions-cheating scandal in 2015 prompted commuters to turn away from diesel vehicles. The market has overestimated the decline in demand for autocatalysts, as stricter emissions standards required higher loading of

the precious metal, Ryan McKay, TD Securities commodity strategist, said in a phone interview.

"Platinum was very under-invested in 2017 and 2018 and that was very much due to the thoughts on diesel" after the emissions scandal, McKay said. "Investors started to take more of a liking to platinum this year. Its strong correlation with gold has certainly helped. That's another driver in the ETF as well."

In the third quarter, the number of diesel cars registered across the European Union, the largest market for such vehicles, fell by 14% to one million units, taking the segment's share of the auto industry below 30%,

European Automobile Manufacturers Association, said in a report in November.

The so-called platinum group metals, which includes palladium and rhodium, will remain in shortage this year as tighter emissions standards offset soft auto demand, Morgan Stanley analysts including Susan Bates said in a note in early December.

The supply imbalance may result in substitution that could be the "most likely cure for platinum's large surplus" of about 871,000 ounces, they said.

Platinum, which is also used in jewellery, has traded at a premium to gold until 2014. As prices of precious metals fell across the board, the growing popularity of gasoline-fuelled

vehicles as a result of the scandal pushed prices of palladium above platinum by 2017. Platinum is now starting to catch up with its peers, with prices climbing 8.6% in December.

By 2025, about 850,000 ounces of palladium used in autocatalysts could be substituted with platinum, "thereby rebalancing both markets," Morgan Stanley said on Dec. 11.

Platinum futures for April delivery rose 1.3% to settle at US\$977.80 an ounce at 1.05pm last Friday on the New York Mercantile Exchange, taking this year's gains for a most-active contract to 22%. Palladium rose 1.5% to US\$1,909.30 an ounce, a 59% surge this year. Gold futures added 0.3% to US\$1,523.10 an ounce. — Bloomberg

Source : Starbiz

Date : 7 January 2020 (Tuesday)

## Gold hits highest since 2013 as Goldman backs bullion in crisis

**SINGAPORE:** Gold has surged to the highest level in more than six years as fast-rising tensions in the Middle East stoked demand for haven assets, with Goldman Sachs Group Inc saying that bullion offered a more effective hedge than oil to the crisis. Palladium extended gains to an all-time high.

Bullion neared US\$1,600 an ounce as Tehran said it would no longer abide by any limits on its enrichment of uranium following the killing of general Qassem Soleimani.

In addition, President Donald Trump said he was prepared to strike Iran "in a disproportionate manner" if it retaliates against any US target.

Gold "has entered 2020 with strong momentum," Gavin Wendt, senior resource analyst at MineLife Pty in Sydney, said in an email.

"When you factor in ongoing uncertainty with respect to US-China trade talks and heightened security issues with Iran, gold really is a no-brainer."

Bullion is building on the largest annual climb since 2010, which was driven by a weaker dollar, lower real rates and the trade war's drag on global growth.

The widening fallout from the drone strike on Soleimani is threatening to escalate, denting risk sentiment and sending investors to havens.

While Goldman analysts cautioned there was a large range of potential scenarios at this stage, the bank said bullion may prove a better bet than oil.

"History shows that under most outcomes gold will likely rally to well beyond current levels," analysts including Jeffrey Currie and Damien Courvalin said in a note dated Jan 6.

That's "consistent with our previous research, which shows that being long gold is a better hedge to such geopolitical risks."

Spot bullion climbed as much as 2.3% to US\$1,588.13 an ounce, the highest level since April 2013, and traded at US\$1,574.29 in London. Futures gained as much as 2.5% to US\$1,590.90. Palladium jumped 1.5% to US\$2,019.73 an ounce, a fresh record, while silver and platinum also rose.

There are other factors supporting bullion. The Federal Reserve is unlikely to raise interest rates anytime within the next six months, which will in turn probably keep a cap on the US dollar – both of which are "extremely positive" for gold, according to MineLife's Wendt.

Gold miners traded higher. Newcrest Mining Ltd, Australia's largest producer, rose 3.9% in Sydney, while Evolution Mining Ltd advanced 6.8%.

Palladium has also benefited from the optimism surrounding havens, as well as its own set of fundamentals – notably being in a multi-year deficit as demand rises in autocatalysts amid stricter emissions standards.

"Palladium, like gold, has been steadily tracking higher over the last two weeks, and the conflict between the United States and Tehran seems to have bolstered this," said Sean MacLean, research strategist at Pepperstone Ltd. "Demand for palladium is increasing faster than its supply, so the long-term trend is on the up anyway." — Bloomberg

Source : Starbiz

Date : 10 January 2020 (Friday)

## Gold price steadies on restraint by US and Iran

**SINGAPORE:** Gold headed for the first back-to-back decline since November, as the United States and Iran stepped back from a deeper military conflict, blunting the appeal of haven assets as global equities gained ground. Palladium motored to yet another record, extending a meteoric rally.

Bullion headed lower after a retaliatory Iranian missile attack on two US bases in Iraq on Wednesday caused no casualties, allowing

President Donald Trump an opportunity to stand down from what had looked like an escalation towards a Mid-East war. Stocks in Asia extended a rally that began in America.

After the slump, bullion remains higher this year, building on the commodity's 18% gain in 2019. Investors are weighing lower interest rates that have cut the opportunity cost of holding gold, while trade-war related risks between the US and China still exist as pro-

gress beyond any phase-one deal is still in question. Spot bullion fell as much as 1% to US\$1,540.33 an ounce, and traded at US\$1,545.07 at 7am in London. Palladium surged to an all-time high of US\$2,148.81 an ounce, driven by a robust set of fundamentals, with strong consumption from carmakers combined with tight supplies. Prices are up about 9% this year already. Silver fell 1.3%, while platinum was steady. — Bloomberg

## Gold soars as flu scare spurs safe-haven bids

**BENGALURU:** Gold prices rose to a two-week high as the spread of a new virus in China stoked fears of a wider epidemic, sparking a sudden bout of risk aversion and sell-off in Asian stocks.

Spot gold prices touched their highest since Jan 8 at US\$1,568.35 and were up 0.3% at \$1,565.63 per ounce. US gold futures were 0.4% higher at US\$1,566.20.

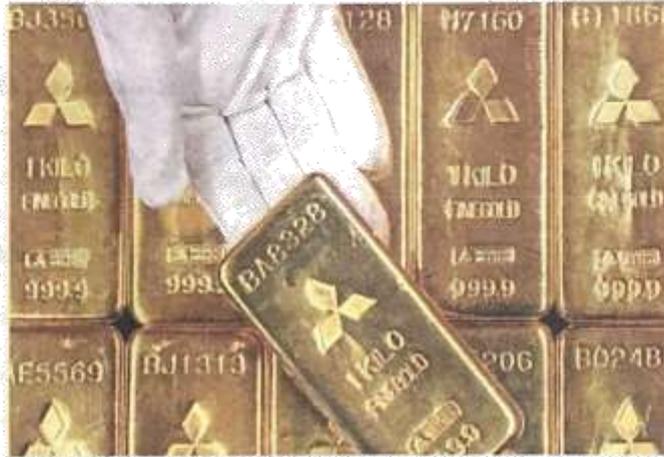
Asian shares slipped as the new coronavirus has spread to more Chinese cities and concerns mounted it could spread further with many travelling for the Lunar New Year holidays.

Gold prices were driven by "the rapid spread of the virus from Wuhan, China, which has caused panic", said Margaret Yang Yan, a market analyst at CMC Markets.

"Chinese New Year holidays are going to worsen the situation as people are bound to travel in China. The fear of outbreak is going to drive up demand for gold for a couple more days," she added.

China will start celebrating the Lunar New Year this weekend.

The yen also gained on concerns



**Gold rallies:** Spot gold prices touched their highest since Jan 8 at US\$1,568.35 and were up 0.3% at \$1,565.63 per ounce. US gold futures were 0.4% higher at US\$1,566.20. — Reuters

of a wider outbreak, which has prompted the World Health Organisation to convene an emergency meeting to assess the situation.

"However, it is hard to see gold progressing above US\$1,600 an

ounce until the health emergency in China escalates sharply and becomes a regional problem," Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst, OANDA, said in a note.

Boosting safe-haven bids further, three Katyusha rockets fell inside

Baghdad's Green Zone which houses government buildings and foreign missions, and the International Monetary Fund on Monday trimmed its global growth forecasts for 2020 and 2021.

Bullion is considered a safe asset during times of financial and geopolitical uncertainty.

Meanwhile, the Bank of Japan kept monetary policy steady and nudged up its economic growth forecasts, as the government's spending package and receding pessimism over the global outlook take some pressure off the central bank to top up stimulus.

Markets also kept a tab on developments in the World Economic Forum in Davos and awaited the European Central Bank's first policy meeting of the year this week.

Palladium advanced 0.7% to US\$2,516.86 an ounce. The auto-catalyst metal hit a record high of US\$2,582.19 in the previous session.

Silver edged higher by 0.1% to US\$18.08 per ounce, while platinum rose 0.2% to US\$1,017.91. — Reuters

Source : StarBiz  
Date : 31 January 2020 (Friday)

## Australia's drought posing bigger risks to gold mines

**MELBOURNE:** A drought in parts of Australia that's delivered record low rainfall is posing potential risks to output at key gold mines in the world's second-largest producer.

Rainfall in New South Wales state has been at one-in-100 year lows for the past two years, Newcrest Mining Ltd said yesterday, flagging that production at its flagship Cadia operation could be impacted by the end of this year if the conditions persist.

The mine is Newcrest's most prof-

itable and accounted for more than two-thirds of earnings in the last fiscal year, according to filings by the nation's top producer of the metal. Its shares fell as much as 5.1% in Sydney.

Australia experienced the lowest December rainfall total on record last month, the Bureau of Meteorology said in a Jan 7 statement. Arid conditions in parts of the Murray-Darling Basin region, which covers several states and key mining districts, have persisted since early 2017 and are severely limiting

water resources.

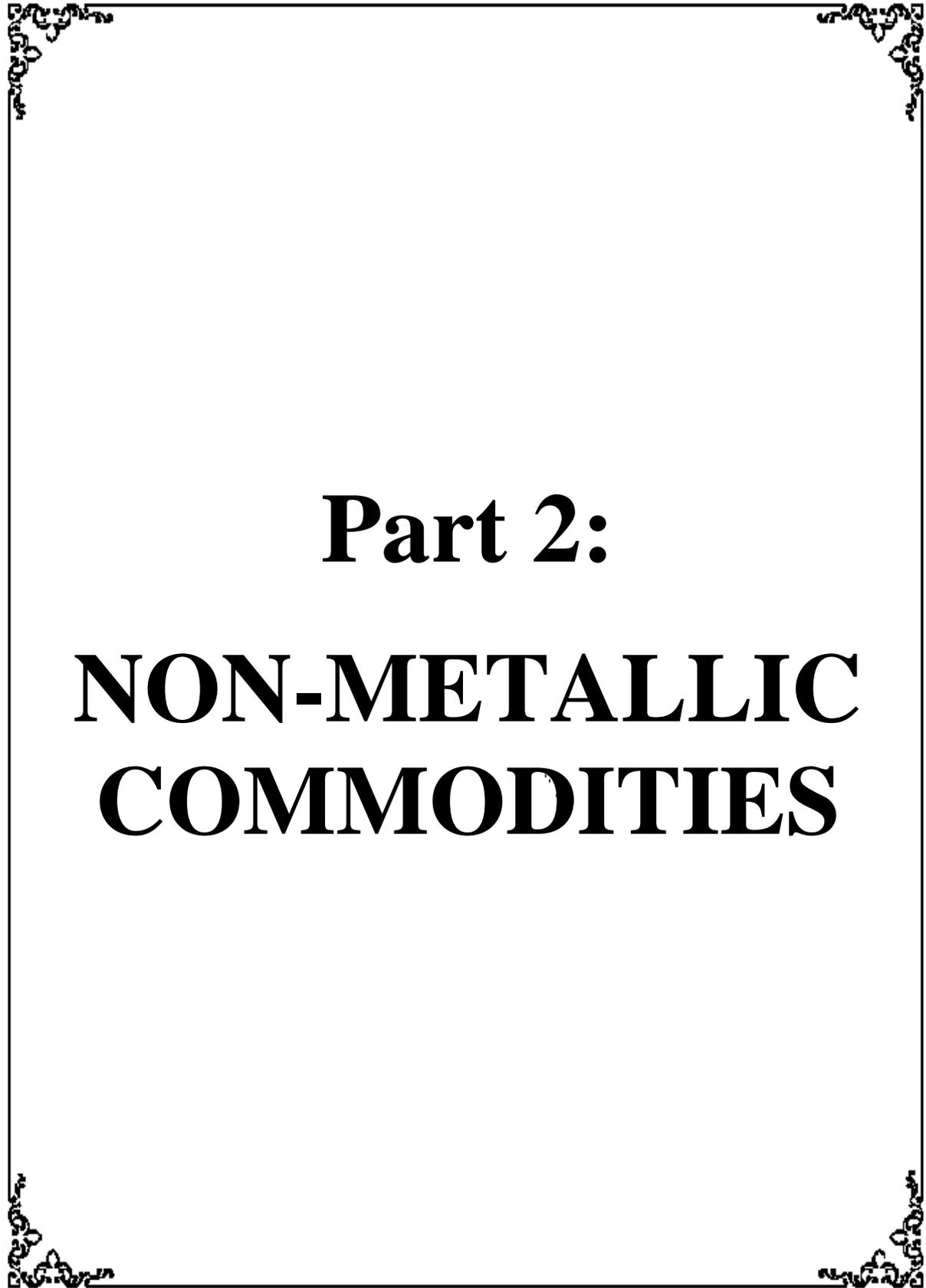
Evolution Mining Ltd, which operates the Cowal mine in NSW on the edge of a lake about 350km west of Sydney, said on Wednesday it had spent the past 12 months seeking to curb the operation's reliance on surface water and comply with state-wide restrictions.

"Due to the sustained drought conditions there is potential for these water restrictions to increase," the producer said in a statement.

China Molybdenum Co, which controls the Northparkes copper

and gold mine in central NSW has also previously said that it is exploring options to boost water conservation.

Gold miners require vast quantities of water to process excavated ore into precious metals, typically using more than 250 megalitres to produce a tonne of gold, according to Australia's national science agency. The mining sector's approach to water stewardship is under increasing scrutiny as investors focus more on environmental performance. - Bloomberg



**Part 2:**

**NON-METALLIC  
COMMODITIES**

## Borneo Oil the main supplier to Lahad Datu limestone plant

By JACK WONG  
starbiz@thestar.com.my

**KUCHING:** Borneo Oil Bhd has been engaged as the main limestone aggregates supplier to an integrated limestone processing plant (ILPP) due for commissioning early this year in Lahad Datu, Sabah.

It is expected to deliver 600 tonnes per day of limestone from its quarry located adjacent to the processing plant.

Borneo Oil is also the project manager for the ongoing construction of the limestone processing plant.

There is rising demand for quarry aggregates, a key construction material, with the implementation of the Sabah Pan Borneo Highway project.

Borneo Oil is currently constructing a conveyor belt delivery system to transport the limestone aggregates from its quarry to the ILPP. The company plans to utilise RM4.81mil from a proposed private placement exercise to finance the construction of the conveyor belt delivery system.

"With completion of the semi-automated conveyor belt delivery system, the group

envisages to achieve better cost and logistic efficiency as less manpower and trucks are required," said the company in its proposed private placement announcement on Dec 31, 2019.

The corporate exercise is expected to raise a minimum of RM21.1mil and a maximum of RM30.56mil. The private placement, which entails an issuance of up to 10% of the company's total issued shares, is expected to be completed in the current quarter.

From the proceeds, about RM11mil would be used to install power grid and an electrical substation for the group's limestone quarry land.

As the group's quarries are located in a remote area with no basic infrastructure, the current operation of crushing and grinding of limestone blocks into limestone aggregates utilises power generators, which according to Borneo Oil, is not viable in the long run.

"The electricity from the installation of the power grid and electrical substation is expected to reduce overall energy costs.

"The group has initiated laying the 26 km power grid together with the installation of an electrical substation. This is expected to be

completed by early 2020. The power grid will be able to supply a total of 4 MW to the group's quarries which will power, among others, the group's conveyor belt delivery system and limestone quarry operations," said Borneo Oil.

The group is expected to spend RM2mil for the upgrading of the general infrastructure, like roads, for the limestone quarry operations.

The balance of the proceeds from the private placement will be for the group's working capital.

Borneo Oil's core business is in fast food and franchise operations under home-grown SugarBun restaurant chain.

According to executive director Raymond Teo Kiew Leong, Borneo Oil is expected to open another Borneo Asian Food restaurant along Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Kuala Lumpur in March.

The franchisee for the new restaurant is the operator of a hotel nearby. The first Borneo Asian Food restaurant commenced business in Menara Hap Seng, Kuala Lumpur in 2016.

The new food franchise brings some of the most popular dishes in Sarawak and Sabah to

food lovers in Peninsular Malaysia.

"The signature dishes are Sarawak laksa and Sabah's giant garupa mee hoon soup," said Teo. Other dishes on the menu include fish burger, SugarBun's roasted chicken and fried rice.

There are Borneo Asian Food outlets in Kuching, Miri and Kota Kinabalu and in Johor. Bintulu is expected to have its first such restaurant in May.

Teo said SugarBun is expanding to Indonesia, with its first restaurant scheduled to commence business operation in the current quarter. The restaurant is housed in a two-storey building with seating capacity of about 150.

SugarBun's Jakarta franchisee plans to set up two other restaurants in the Indonesian capital.

"We believe there is big business potential for SugarBun in Indonesia as its food, culture and language are similar to Malaysia. There is also its large population.

"Our next business target is Kalimantan with Indonesia shifting its capital to there," said Teo. However, there is yet to be any concrete plan to expand there.

## Claypot makers find it tough to get workers

TRADITIONAL Indian claypot makers are facing a tough time due to difficulties in getting workers, *Makkal Osai* reported.

Arumugam Perumal, who operates a pot factory in Kuala Selangor, said he used to employ many locals to produce the pots using the traditional method.

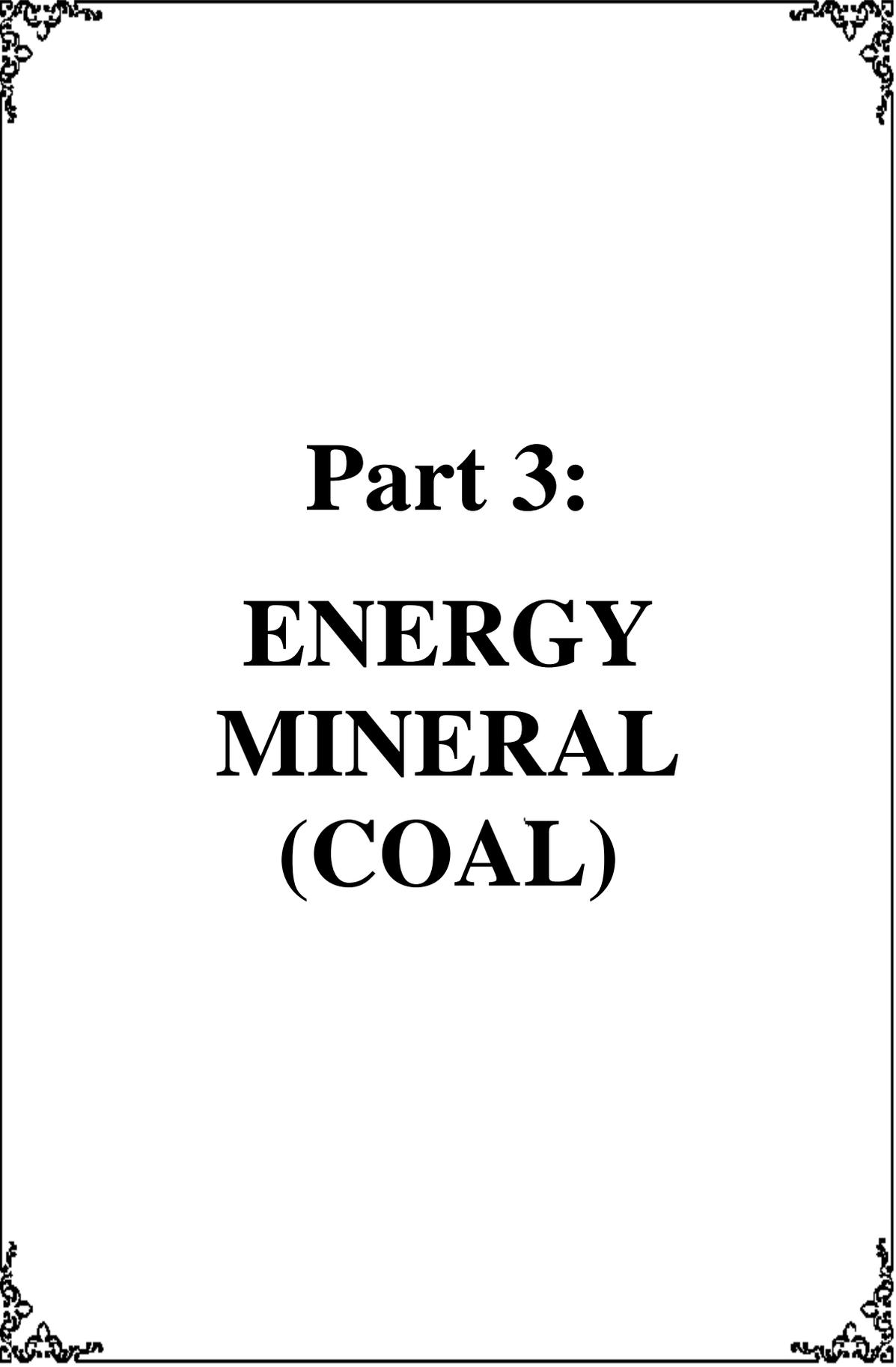
However, he said since the process has become mechanised, locals are no longer keen to work in the industry.

Arumugam said there used to be more than six factories in the area but only two are still operating.

He is the third generation running the family business after his grandfather Venkadasalam and father Perumal. His son Anand is also showing aptitude and the family is hoping that he will take over the business one day.

Arumugam also hoped that the traditional method of making pots would be preserved despite the industry getting more automated.

He urged the authorities to help the industry, especially with hiring of foreign workers.



**Part 3:**  
**ENERGY**  
**MINERAL**  
**(COAL)**

## Merkel clinches deal with state premiers to shutter coal

**BERLIN:** Chancellor Angela Merkel has reached a deal in principle with Germany's coal-producing states for Europe's largest economy to begin phasing out the dirty fossil fuel.

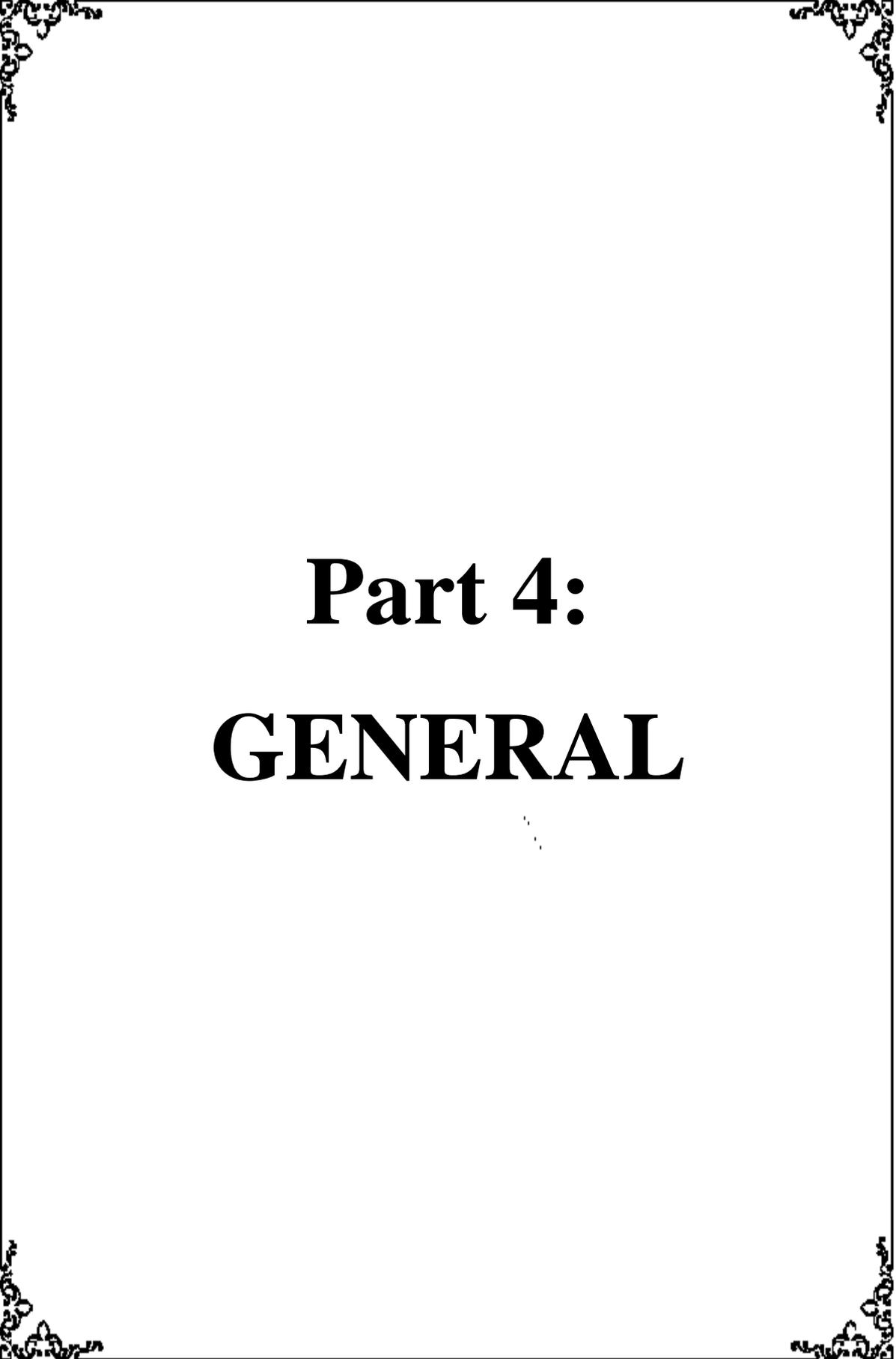
The talks that began on Wednesday evening and lasted well into the night set out a timeline for shutting down the country's coal-fired power generation by 2038.

As part of the deal, the government reaffirmed its legal commitment to disburse the 40 billion euros (US\$45bil) it had previously promised as compensation for regional infrastructure projects.

In addition, Berlin said it aimed to get a coal exit law approved by the first half of this year, according to a statement from the government's press office.

The deal agreed to by four state premiers doesn't mention compensation to power utilities, which was under separate negotiations for weeks. Mine operators and power utilities must still give their final approval.

"It was a long night – it lasted until 2 am – but we were able to achieve a sensible agreement," Armin Laschet, premier of the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, said in an interview with Deutschlandfunk radio. "The time frame that we've agreed on is ambitious, but realistic." — Bloomberg



# **Part 4:**

# **GENERAL**

# Fearful residents want hill project stopped

By MANJIT KAUR  
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

**IPOH:** Logging and land clearing on Kledang Saiong hill, within the Kinta Valley Geopark, is creating fear among nearby residents who want authorities to stop the project.

Neighbourhood Watch Committee chairman Shamsul Kamar Ani said land clearing on the 151.49ha site started a month ago.

The impact not only affected the flora and fauna on the hills but was a safety concern for the 1,000 residents there, he said.

"About two years ago, when illegal corn farms were set up near the hills, each time during a downpour, our area was flooded.

"That issue is yet to settle, and now a new agriculture project is planned up on the piece of land belonging to the Perak State Development Corporation (PKNP).

"The project is making us fearful and worried. It may cause floods, landslides and even mudslides," he told a press conference at the surau in the residential area here yesterday.

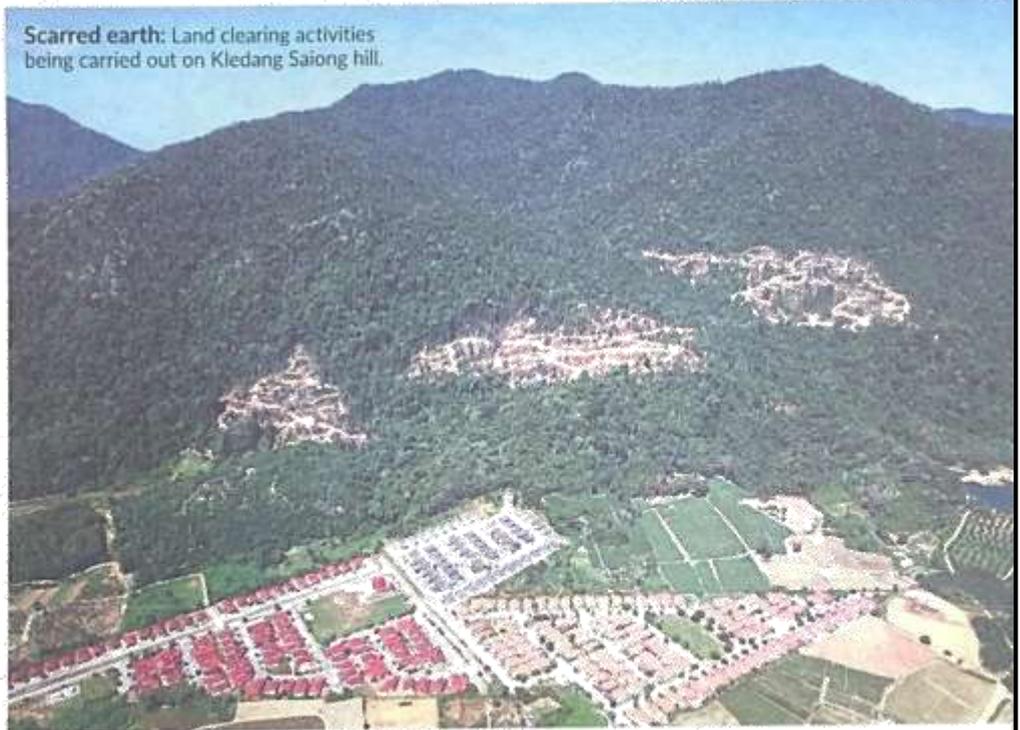
Present were surau chairman Datuk Ahmad Mohd, residents and Sahabat Alam Malaysia field officer Meor Razak Meor Abdul Rahman.

Drone images of the hill showed clearing works along with heavy machinery.

Ahmad said the authorities, in allowing the project to continue, were disrespecting the declaration of the Geopark by the Sultan of Perak in 2018.

He said since the project started, the streams had turned into "teh tarik" colour and residents were also worried that a waterfall, which attracted many people, would soon turn murky as well.

Scarred earth: Land clearing activities being carried out on Kledang Saiong hill.



"We lodged a police report on Saturday and we hope PKNP and the state government would immediately stop the project," he said.

On Dec 8, Meor Razak had said although the clearing activity was within the 500.2ha which had been degazetted from its forest reserve status, it is still part of the Kinta Valley Geopark.

He said the decision to degazette the area was made by the previous administration and the current state government should review the move.

On Dec 11, PKNP in a statement said approval was granted for the land to be cleared for an orchard and after an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) dated on Jan 21, 2009.

"The statement also noted PKNP had appointed Insan Permata Sdn Bhd to conduct the clearing and licences were issued from the state Forestry Department, from Nov 1 until Jan 31 this year.

However, during the press conference yesterday, Meor Razak questioned the validity of the EIA

conducted in 2009.

"Usually upon approval, the EIA is valid for two years, but it is 10 years now. A new EIA must be done.

"If the project was approved by the previous government and no activity was carried out, why must the current government go on with the project?" he said.

Meor Razak said Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Faizal Azumu, who is also PKNP chairman, must take immediate action to stop the project.

Source : The Star  
Date : 6 January 2020 (Monday)

# StarMetro GREATER KLANG VALLEY

THE STAR, MONDAY 6 JANUARY 2020

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## Ridging to a geopark

Plans to pursue Unesco status for the Gombak Selangor Quartz Ridge have been put on hold as the Selangor government wants to focus on developing the site into a national geopark instead. >2&3

The eroded and vertically jagged rock talibique that rises out of the green tropical forest is a distinguishing feature of the Gombak Selangor Quartz Ridge. It is the access route to hike up to Bukit Taber that has been sealed off. — GLENN CHAN/The Star



#### PHONE COUNSELLING

The Buddhist Gem Fellowship is offering free phone counselling service from 2pm to 4pm (Wednesday to Friday), and 7.30pm to 9.30pm (Monday to Friday). Call 03-7859 9610/82.

#### BLOOD DONATION

Prince Court Medical Centre Kuala Lumpur will hold a blood donation drive on Jan 15, 9am to 4.30pm. Donors should be healthy individuals aged 18 to 60, above 45kg in weight, have not taken medication or antibiotics recently and their last blood donation was more than three months ago. For details, call 012-415 2887 (Marisa) or email marisa.nashhor@princecourt.com

#### TRAFFIC MATTERS

● A 200m stretch of Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah (N), bound after Public Bank) will close from midnight to 5am nightly till Jan 17 excluding Friday and Saturday, to facilitate MRT project works. For details, call 1-800-82-6868 (MRT hotline) or visit [www.mymrt.com.my](http://www.mymrt.com.my)

● Jalan Kejaya will be closed from the Temasya Anggan residential area until Temasya Kasih Condo to facilitate Telekom Malaysia cable relocation works for LRT3 project. Closure is 9am to 4pm daily except Sunday. For details, call 1-800-18-2585 (LRT3 hotline).

#### COMPOUND DISCOUNT

Shah Alam City Council is offering discounts of up to 50% for various compounds until Jan 31. Parking compounds are discounted to RM10 for those issued from 2002 to 2009 and RM30 for notices from 2010 to 2020. For details, call 03-5522 2882/03-5510 5133 ext 1477/1656/1657/1658 or visit [eps.mbsa.gov.my](http://eps.mbsa.gov.my)

#### ORGANIC MARKET

Centre for Environment, Technology and Development Malaysia (Cetdem) is providing a platform for small organic farmers to sell vegetables, free-range chicken, compost, fertilisers and seedlings/saplings at Cetdem Organic Farming Community Centre, No.29, Jalan 19/15, Petaling Jaya on Jan 11 from 7.30am to 11am. For details, call 016-210 5826 / 03-7875 7767.

#### KLANG LHDN BRANCH

The Klang Inland Revenue Board investigation branch office has relocated from Wisma Sunway to Level 16, Menara Port Tech, Jalan Tiara 3, Bandar Baru Klang since Jan 2. For details, call 03-33614633 or visit [www.hasil.gov.my](http://www.hasil.gov.my)

#### PJ DRAFT INSPECTION

Stakeholders can inspect the draft of the Section 13 Petaling Jaya Special Area Plan (First Amendment) until Jan 17 at Menara MBPI lobby, Jalan Tengah from 8.30am to 5pm. Any objection must be submitted in writing on or before Jan 17. For details, call 03-7956 3544 ext 364 / 372 / 262 or email [rtpl@mbpp.gov.my](mailto:rtpl@mbpp.gov.my)

#### CNY SPRING CLEANING

Petaling Jaya City Council is organising a special festive spring cleaning programme on weekends at selected locations until Jan 19. Bulk waste and unwanted items should be placed outside houses before 10am. For details, visit [facebook.com/petalingjayacitycouncil](http://facebook.com/petalingjayacitycouncil)

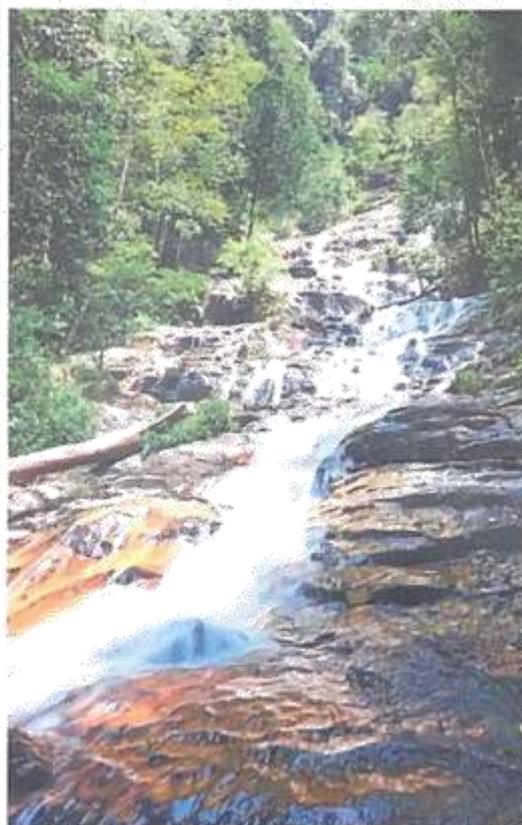
#### OPEN FOR REGISTRATION

Ipoh Down Syndrome Centre is now open for registration, at No.2, Persiaran Bercham Selatan 27, Taman Sri Kurau, Ipoh during office hours. For details, call 05-546 8386.



There are concerns that developing the Gombak Selangor Quartz Ridge into a geopark may jeopardise the fragile ecosystem there. — Photos: FAIHAN GHANI and GLENN GUAN/The Star

## Protecting nature's wonder



Kanching Eco-Forest Park is one of the suggested sites for the Gombak-Hulu Langat Selangor Geopark.

### Environmentalists question need to develop quartz ridge into one of 23 geosites in Selangor

By SHALINI RAVINDRAN  
[shalinravindran@thestar.com.my](mailto:shalinravindran@thestar.com.my)

THE Selangor government has decided to hold off on pursuing Unesco status for the Gombak Selangor Quartz Ridge (GSQR), believed to be the longest pure quartz dyke in the world.

The state will instead focus on developing it as a national geopark and gazeteting it as a national heritage site.

Citing several reasons for the decision, state culture, tourism, Malay customs and heritage committee chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Asari said a team of experts had found that the quartz ridge was not ready to be nominated for Unesco certification.

"There are very rigid and high standards when it comes to a Unesco certification, so we will concentrate on developing it as a national geopark."

"There is a team working to prepare a dossier that we can present to the National Heritage Department (NHD) as our application to gazette it as a national heritage site," he disclosed.

He said the state would also focus on developing the quartz ridge as part of the Gombak-Hulu Langat Selangor Geopark along with 22 other geosites in Selangor.

A geopark is a unified area that advances the protection and use of geological heritage in a sustainable way and promotes the economic well-being of the people

who live there.

Some of the other sites being considered for a geosite include Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve and Broga Hills.

In 2017, GSQR was nominated as a Unesco Heritage Site, alongside Royal Belum State Park in Perak and FRIM in Selangor.

Based on Unesco's Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage, the quartz ridge was nominated based on two criteria:

(vii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;

(viii) to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.

During the state assembly sitting last December, Rashid reportedly said that one of the reasons for the decision to hold off seeking Unesco certification was because the esthetic value of the quartz ridge was not "superlative" in comparison to other sites under the same criteria.

This included sites such as the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve (Mexico), Kilimanjaro National Park (Tanzania) and the Juzhaigou Valley Scenic and Historic Interest Area (China).

Another reason stated was the



The Gombak Selangor Quartz Ridge is a gigantic vertical rock slab built entirely of quartz mineral in various forms, extended for up to 14km long and 200m wide. It is believed to be the longest pure quartz dyke in the world. — Filepic



The pristine waters are one of the main attractions of the Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve, one of the areas being considered for development as a geosite. — Filepic

although the GSQR had data on the history of very important earth formation, admittedly scientific research, publications and reference sources as well as specific information on quartz in the GSQR were still limited.

Rashid had also explained that out-of-control recreational activities such as illegal hiking packages offered online could damage the integrity of the GSQR site.

The executive councillor added that Selangor would require two years for preliminary preparations before submitting GSQR as a Unesco heritage site.

**One of a kind**

The GSQR is unique not only because of its size but also its landscape, which comprises elongated craggy rocks in a green tropical forest.

Three combined characteristics make the GSQR a truly unique natural treasure: its size, the fact that it is fully exposed and its pseudo-karst morphology.



Abdul Rashid says a team of experts opine that the quartz ridge is not ready to be nominated for Unesco certification.



Leela says a more comprehensive management plan and better clarity is needed before the state goes ahead with plans to turn the sites into geoparks.

It is a gigantic vertical rock slab built entirely of quartz mineral in various forms, extended for up to 14km long and 200m wide.

According to experts, a giant-size quartz vein that is more than 10km long is rare.

Its dramatic mid-section — an elongated and vertical craggy rock

landscape that rises out of the green tropical forest, is a distinguishing feature, deserving of its comparison to the spine of a dragon.

The quartz ridge has so far narrowly avoided being an environmental casualty in several developments that would have destroyed the ridge.

**Suggested geosites for Gombak Hulu Langat Selangor Geopark**

Location	Local authority			District land office	
	Selayang	Ampang Jaya	Kajang	Gombak	Hulu Langat
Gombak Selangor Quartz Ridge	✓	✓		✓	
Templer Park	✓			✓	
Bukit Takun & Bukit Arak Takun	✓			✓	
Kanchang	✓			✓	
Eco-Forest Park	✓			✓	
Commonwealth Forest Park	✓			✓	
Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM)	✓			✓	
Nasional Leprosy Control Centre	✓			✓	
Sungai Buloh Bukit Lagong/ Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve	✓			✓	
Lombong Arang Batu Batu Arang	✓			✓	
Selayang Hot Springs				✓	
Gombak Hot Springs				✓	
Klang Gate Dam		✓		✓	
Tekali Quartz Ridge			✓	✓	✓
Sungai Gebu Waterfalls			✓	✓	✓
Petangun River			✓	✓	✓
Guntung Nuang			✓	✓	✓
Duduk Tua Hot Springs			✓	✓	✓
Brogas Hill			✓	✓	✓
Semenyih Hot Springs			✓	✓	✓
Sungai Serai Waterfalls			✓	✓	✓
Sungai Tekala Waterfalls			✓	✓	✓
Semenyih Dam			✓	✓	✓
Sungai Langat Dam			✓	✓	✓

Source: State culture, tourism, Malay Customs and heritage committee

In April, it was announced that the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project would be revived with a slightly modified route to bypass the sensitive environmental area.

Several years ago, a proposed Phase Two for East Klang Valley Expressway (EKVE) project was rejected as it would have cut through the Ulu Gombak forest reserve north of the Klang Gates Dam.

However, it is understood that an alternative alignment has been proposed so that the Kuala Lumpur Outer Ring Road (KLORR) can be completed.

**Stakeholders' concerns**

While the concept of a geopark can boost the site's prominence, stakeholders are concerned about the sustainability of the project.

Treat Every Environment Special (Trees) director Leela Panikkar questioned the need for a geopark when the quartz ridge was already gazetted as part of the Selangor State Park.

"At the moment the ridge, along with several of the other suggested geosites, is managed by Selangor Forestry Department. Will this change if the ridge becomes a geopark?"

"A more comprehensive management plan and better clarity are needed before the state goes ahead with these plans.

"The state should detail exactly what these plans to develop the site into a geopark would entail," she said.

Leela emphasised that any additional tourism or economic ventures in the area could be detrimental to the ridge.

"The ridge is very fragile, and as

it serves as the walls for the Klang Gates Dam, the place must be kept intact.

"This (making a geopark) could open up the area and it is worrying to think about what other plans this could bring.

"Sometimes, the best way to preserve a place is to simply leave the area as is," she said.

At over 108,000ha in size, the Selangor Heritage Park is the third largest park in peninsular Malaysia and is a result of a joint project undertaken by Trees and the Selangor government.

Taman Melawati Residents Association (TMRA) chairman Azhari Abdul Taharin said there was no point in pursuing certification for a national heritage site if the state continued to allow development.

"There is constantly new developments being approved and many of these are at the edge of the foothills of the quartz ridge.

"There are also many individual-owned plots of land near the ridge.

"Although they are designated as agricultural land, the owners can in future decide to change the land status and develop it," he said.

In April last year, TMRA along with Society of Eco Greater Melawati (SeeGem) had called for all future hillside developments in the area to be reviewed and, if necessary, halted.

"The Federal and Selangor state authorities should undertake a firm commitment to preserve the environment and ecosystem of the Gombak quartz ridge by rejecting any development, including a proposed power line realignment and extension of EKVE," said TMRA and SeeGem.

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## **MINERAL ECONOMICS SECTION**

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