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Secrets of a mining past



History preserved: The limestone pinnacles at a former tin mining pond in Malim Nawar. — Photo courtesy of Kinta Valley Watch

Hidden limestone formations showcase Ipoh's lasting tin legacy

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IPOH: Hidden within a former tin mining pond in Malim Nawar near Kampar is a rare geological feature, towering limestone pinnacles formed millions of years ago and later exposed through decades of mining activity.

The site, near Kampung Changkat Baru, believed to be one of only a handful in the Kinta Valley featuring limestone pinnacles rising from a former mining pond, is a legacy of Perak's tin mining past and the valley's ancient limestone landscape.

There are a few similar sites located in Teja, Batu Gajah and Jeram, where pinnacle ponds are visible.

Ching Boon Tat, the spokesman for the limestone hill conservation group Kinta Valley Watch, said the formations emerged during tin mining operations when miners extracted tin ore from sand deposits but left behind the underlying limestone bedrock.

"During tin mining, only the tin

was taken out. The sand was washed and removed, but the limestone beneath was too hard and too deep to excavate.

"That is how these sharp limestone pinnacles became exposed," he said.

Ching explained that not all mining areas pushed sand back after operations ended, and in locations where this did not happen, the limestone formations were visible.

He said over time, rainwater filled the abandoned mining pits, forming ponds and lakes that now surround the pinnacles.

"The formations are part of the wider limestone system that runs through the Kinta Valley, which includes Gunung Lang and other karst landscapes in the region.

"The limestone is millions of years old and forms one continuous mass underground, even though it appears fragmented on the surface.

"These are what we call tower karst formations. Some areas show older towers that stand apart, while younger formations

are still connected at the base," he said.

Ching said the pond in the Malim Nawar site is estimated to be roughly the size of a football field and is said to be the only known pond in the area featuring visible limestone pinnacles.

He said in recent years, the site has attracted interest from educators and researchers.

"I regularly bring pupils, university students, geology researchers and international visitors to the area.

"It is very suitable for learning, geology, environmental history and water safety," he said, adding that activities are conducted under strict safety procedures, including the use of life jackets and trained guides.

He stressed that while the site has potential for low-impact educational tourism, it should not be developed for housing or heavy infrastructure.

"Many former mining ponds have already been used for housing.

"Once you destroy a place like

this, you can never bring it back," he said.

Ching said that at Batu Gajah, near Kampung Pisang, a naturally formed stone resembling an elephant is also located at a former tin mining pond.

He said this pond has drawn attention for its unique shape and the presence of ancient marine fossils in the surrounding limestone.

"The limestone rock distinctly resembles an elephant when viewed from a particular angle, while appearing different from other perspectives.

"What makes the site significant is not merely the stone's appearance but the geological history embedded within the limestone.

"The area was once part of an ancient seabed, dating back hundreds of millions of years, and contains well-preserved marine fossils," he said, adding that despite the significance, these natural treasures have yet to receive widespread public recognition.