KEMENTERIAN TENAGA DAN SUMBER ASLI

KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

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Detailed report on limestone hills accessible online

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PETALING JAYA: Perak has the most intensive mining activity on limestone hills in the country, according to a study containing the most comprehensive information on Malaysia's limestone hills to date.

The Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation of Universiti Malaysia Sabah said that 32 of the 138 or 23% of outcrops in the state are being quarried, or have already been quarried.

The institute also reported that Sabah, Sarawak and Perlis recorded mining activities of about 10% of the outcrops in the respective states.

The northern state also has the largest number of outcrops used as recreational, tourism and religious sites.

According to newly published research by the institute, there are altogether 1,393 limestone hills in Malaysia, with 911 of them located in Peninsular Malaysia, while 482 are in Sabah and Sarawak.

To date, eight limestone outcrops in Peninsular Malaysia have been completely destroyed due to quarrying, though most of them are considered to be small.

Assoc Prof Dr Liew Thor-Seng of the institute said that while mining activities at limestone hills were unavoidable, there should be proper planning on which hills could be mined.

"Cement is a main resource for the country, which is still developing. There is still a need to construct buildings and other infrastructure.

"But there should be proper studies on what hills should be quarried or otherwise," he said.

Liew and two other researchers published the publicly accessible online resource.

The resource titled "Conservation of Limestone Ecosystems of Malaysia" contains detailed maps, photos and data in seven eBooks.

"For the first time, we have a land-use planning tool that can help state governments and scientists identify which limestone hills should be urgently protected," said Prof Gopalasamy Reuben Clements from Sunway University, who is also a co-researcher of Project Limestone.

"It can also reduce the number of hills sacrificed for development through better planning."

According to the publication, Kelantan has 298 outcrops while Sarawak has the largest outcrop base area at 278km.

It said that substantial limestone outcrops in terms of number and size area are found in Perlis, Perak, Kedah, Pahang, Sabah, Sarawak and Kelantan.

The publication said that 0.3% of Peninsular Malaysia's land surface is covered by limestone hills, while for Sabah and Sarawak, it is 0.2% of the total land surface.

The majority of the limestone outcrops in Malaysia are small, with only 124 or 9% of them larger than 1km.

The protection and restoration of limestone ecosystems are listed as one of the 17 national biodiversity targets in the National Policy of Biological Diversity 2016-2025.