

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013



**Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)**

JKR 641 Jalan Kelantan, Bukit Persekutuan

50480 Kuala Lumpur

Tel: + 6 03 2287 9422 Fax: + 6 03 2287 8773

---

**Mr Jim Rushworth**

**Vice President**

Environment and Public Affairs

Quarries, Aggregates and Concrete

LaFarge International

61, rue des Belles Feuilles

BP 40

75782 Paris Cedex 16

France

Dear Sir,

**Re: Conservation of the Gunung Kanthan Limestone Hill, Perak, Malaysia**

Greetings from the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS).

As a start, we would like to introduce ourselves as the largest and oldest environmental NGO in Malaysia as well as in South East Asia, with a history that spans over seven decades. Established in 1940, MNS's mission is to *promote the conservation of Malaysia's natural heritage*. MNS currently has over 4,000 members, 14 volunteer-run Branches, six Nature Education Centres and a full time Secretariat of 40 staff based in Kuala Lumpur.

We have international partnerships with Birdlife International and as a member organisation to International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

In Malaysia, MNS has been involved in limestone hill research and conservation since the early 1960s. Specifically and most pertinently, in 1990 MNS organised and carried out an extensive year-long survey of the 45 limestone hills in the Kinta Valley that included Gunung Kanthan. The results were reported in '**A Conservation Assessment of Limestone Hills in the Kinta Valley**' in 1991. This report is highly respected and is still quoted today. One of its conclusions was that Gunung Kanthan was one of the four most important hills for the conservation of biodiversity and called for its legal protection. It certainly meets all the criteria of a high conservation value area.

MNS is here calling on Lafarge Malaysia Berhad (LMB) to immediately abandon the proposal to quarry that southern part of Gunung Kathan that includes Gua Kanthan. We are extremely concerned that the quarrying activities will permanently destroy important geological features and threaten plant and animal biodiversity that are an important and valuable part of Malaysia's natural heritage. Quarrying will destroy caves and fossils and endanger species with extinction.

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013



**Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)**

JKR 641 Jalan Kelantan, Bukit Persekutuan

50480 Kuala Lumpur

Tel: + 6 03 2287 9422 Fax: + 6 03 2287 8773

---

Based on solid scientific evidence enumerated in the **10 Reasons why Gunung Kathan should be Conserved** (attached), we call on Lafarge Malaysia Berhad to give up the proposal to quarry the pristine southern part of the limestone hill. It is particularly important that the present unexploited area of the hill be kept intact and surrounded by a buffer zone of vegetation in order to prevent degradation, extinction or loss of plant and animal species and to maintain the water regime.

We understand from your policy and PR documents that Lafarge is keen to promote sustainable development through accountability and enhanced awareness; covering wide issues ranging from sustainable construction, water conservation, mitigating climate change, biodiversity protection, and valuing local cultures. Further, your biodiversity guidelines developed with the help of WWF International for Lafarge sites spells out consideration for high conservation value areas in the decisions making for new sites, including consulting with local biodiversity experts and involving the local stakeholders.

MNS is aware that LaFarge Malaysia Berhad has also engaged the Institute of Biological Sciences, Universiti Malaya under Prof. Dr. Rosli Hashim to carry out a biodiversity study of Gua Kanthan from June to December this year. He was invited and present during our meeting recently. We aspect the results will confirm the richness of the biodiversity of Gunung Kanthan.

It is in line with this ethos that we are requesting that Lafarge Malaysia Berhad give up the proposal to quarry the southern part of Gunung Kanthan so that Lafarge's stated objectives and ambitions for sustainability are not compromised in Malaysia.

A summary of our call to conserve Gunung Kanthan Limestone Hills is attached.

We reiterate that we are deeply concerned about the status of the quarrying activities at Gunung Kanthan that endangers one of the most important sites for the conservation of Malaysia's limestone natural heritage. We hope that Lafarge will equally value the conservation importance of Gunung Kathan.

Yours sincerely,

**Malaysian Nature Society**

---

**Prof. Dr. Maketab Mohamed**

President

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013



**Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)**

JKR 641 Jalan Kelantan, Bukit Persekutuan

50480 Kuala Lumpur

Tel: + 6 03 2287 9422 Fax: + 6 03 2287 8773

---

C.c.

1. Mr. Bruno Lafont, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Lafarge  
Fax: + 331 44341200; Email: [sustainability@lafarge.com](mailto:sustainability@lafarge.com)
2. Mr. Bradley Mulroney, President & Chief Executive Officer of Lafarge Malaysia  
Fax: + 603 77224100; Email: [info@my.lafarge.com](mailto:info@my.lafarge.com)
3. Dr Marco Lambertini, Chief Executive, Birdlife International  
Fax: +4401223277200; Email: [birdlife@birdlife.org](mailto:birdlife@birdlife.org)
4. Julia Marton-Lefevre, Director General, IUCN  
Fax: +41229990002; Email: [mail@iucn.org](mailto:mail@iucn.org)



**Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)**

JKR 641 Jalan Kelantan, Bukit Persekutuan

50480 Kuala Lumpur

Tel: + 6 03 2287 9422 Fax: + 6 03 2287 8773

---

## **Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) Position on the Proposal to Quarry the Southern Part of Gunung Kanthan**

In 1990, MNS carried out a year-long survey of the 45 limestone karst hills in the Kinta Valley that were reported in 'A Conservation Assessment of Limestone Hills in the Kinta Valley' in 1991. One of the conclusions of the report was that Gunung Kanthan was listed among the four most important hills for conservation based on four aspects, geological, zoological, botanical, and cultural/recreational. Among these four, Gunung Kathan was the only one that was important for all the four aspects.

### **10 Reasons why Gunung Kathan should be Conserved**

1. The Gua Kanthan cave is home to the endemic trapdoor spider, *Liphistius kanthan*, that is only known from this cave. Because of its extreme rarity and vulnerability because the hill is not legally protected, it is internationally rated as **Critically Endangered** in the IUCN Red List<sup>1</sup>.
2. Gunung Kathan also supports a population of the **Critically Endangered** *Paraboea vulpina*, a rosette plant belong to the Gesneriaceae, the African Violet family.
3. In addition, the rich flora includes a further seven plant species, *Actinostachys inopinata*, *Cycas clivicola*, *Kibatalia laurifolia*, *Microchirita sericea*, *Paraboea capitata* var. *capitata* and *P. paniculata*, on Malaysia's Red List with the IUCN category of **Endangered**. Many grow in the rare fragment of limestone forest that still supports large trees and is important not only as the home of the serow but also stabilises the water regime of the hill by preventing erosion, sedimentation, etc.
4. Gunung Kathan is the site of a rich snail fauna, including two species **endemic to Gunung Kanthan**, *Opisthostoma trapezium* and *Sinoennea chrysalis*, that are found nowhere else in the world.
5. Gunung Kathan provides a refuge for the elusive, rare **Serow** goat, *Capricornis sumatraensis*, that lives in the limestone forest, a precious remnant amid vegetable farms and urban and industrial development. It is a **totally protected wildlife** species under Malaysia's Act 76; Protection of Wildlife Act 1972 (Amended 2006).
6. The richness of the biodiversity of Gunung Kathan is seen by the discovery of a **new species** of snail and a new species of plant. No doubt more detailed study will reveal further discoveries of new and rare plants and animals.

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013



**Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)**

JKR 641 Jalan Kelantan, Bukit Persekutuan

50480 Kuala Lumpur

Tel: + 6 03 2287 9422 Fax: + 6 03 2287 8773

- 
7. Gunung Kanthan is one of the oldest hills in the Kinta Valley and its history can be traced back 425-500 million years BP to the Ordovician-Lower Silurian Period. It retains well preserved **fossils** of the extinct sea lilies, called crinoids, estimated to be at least 300 million years old.
  
  8. Gunung Kanthan is well-known for its cave, Gua Kathan, that houses the **Cathedral Cavern** and a 435 m long tunnel with a small stream running through it.
  
  9. From the cultural aspect, Gunung Kanthan houses **three cave temples**, both Hindu and Buddhist, where the serene, quiet atmosphere of the caves provides a conducive atmosphere for prayers.
  
  10. From the **tourism and recreational** aspect, the spectacular cave system regularly attracts those interested in caving and it is said to be the most-visited cave in Ipoh. The temple caves also receive a continuous stream of worshippers throughout the year and particularly at festival times.

<sup>1</sup>IUCN is the International Union for the Conservation of Nature that has set up a system for assessing the level of threat to the continued survival of species. Critically endangered species are those most at risk of extinction.