

# KARST NEWS

Vol. 4, Issue 3

The Newsletter of the Malaysian Karst Society

2007

For members only

## Message from the President

Dear Fellow Members,

There has been many changes in the MKS over the past few months. Our long time office staff, Ghee Hong, has left us and now our new Executive Officer is Jasmin Saw. The office layout has been changed to reflect this change too. Over the last few months, we have seen the post of Secretary falling vacant twice. Our elected Secretary Kenny had to resign and was replaced by Dr Loo who subsequently had to resign too. Thankfully, now Robert has accepted the post of Secretary. We have a full team again and is rearing to move forward again.

The society has two new projects. One is the preservation and management of the Tambun Rock Drawings. These ancient works of art has been neglected for far too long and the society wants to take positive action with all relevant parties to see to their preservation. This national heritage deserves to be taken care of. At the same time, we hope that they can become a major tourist attraction for Perak and specifically for Ipoh.

The other project involves the exploration and mapping of a cave system called the Wang Mu Streamway located within the Perlis State Park. This cave system has been surveyed to a length of 1.9km long and this project intends to try to push

several unexplored leads with the hope of making this system the longest in Peninsular Malaysia. To achieve this, this project has to explore and map at least another 1.8km of passages. This cave system is another important national heritage as it is among the many natural caves in Perlis that was previously mined for tin. This activity is unique to Perlis as no where else in the world was tin mined so extensively in natural caves. This expedition will be held during the coming Perlis dry season between December and March.

The society will be starting the Cave and Karst Database project very soon and will be needing volunteers to help with the collection of data. We are hoping to get funding for this project but nevertheless, we are confident we can start on a small scale before the end of this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our Muslim friends Selamat Hari Raya Aidil Fitri. To our Hindu friends Happy Deepavali. I hope to see you all involved in our society. See you next time!

Hymeir Kamarudin  
President

### Tambun rock drawings



### Inside this issue:

<i>Lo Po Sang / Baba Connection</i>	2
<i>Gua Lanno Trip report</i>	3
<i>Cave News</i>	4
<i>Coming Trips</i>	5
<i>Application / Renewal Form</i>	6

### MKS Committee 2007/2008

Hymeir Kamarudin	President
Yong Shim Hian	Vice President
Robert Percival	Secretary
Bernard Lee	Treasurer
Mohd. Tajuddin Liew Chin Chow Yin Ee Kiong	Committee Members

## Rediscovery of the Lost Connection Between Lo Po Sang and Baba Cave *By Hymeir K. & Surin Suksuwan*

Gua Baba and Gua Lo Po Sang are both located within the Wang Mu Forest of the Perlis State Park, at the northern tip of Peninsular Malaysia. The caves of the area were previously mined for tin that was found in the alluvium on the cave floor. These caves were all abandoned sometime in the 1980s due to the low tin prices. Gua Baba was previously surveyed to about 1.4km long while Gua Lo Po Sang to a little over 1km.

Both these caves were previously separately surveyed by a joint MNS Kedah Cave Group / WWF Malaysia team. Having taken the positions of the cave entrances with the help of handheld GPS unit, we were able to place their location precisely on a map and noted that their passages came to about 150m from each other. A connection between the two caves was certainly probable. Conversations with ex-tin miners further convinced us to attempt a "reconnection" of the two caves.

### **Gua Lo Po Sang**

The entrance to Gua Lo Po Sang is located in the hills after a tough 2 hour uphill trek. The first part of the cave is practically vertical. Several pitches had to be negotiated. Old wooden ladders, remnants of the mining days are still found on some pitches. They proved useful, for every pitch with a ladder still in good condition meant one less rope to haul and rig. Where the ladders have rotted away, ropes were used to descend. The longest of these pitches is a 14m pitch with plunging waterfall. An active stream is encountered at 70m underground and the stream continues the rest of the way.

After the last pitch, the cave is rather flat with passages generally heading southeast. It later joins another passage going north - south. The stream at this point flows north. Passages were found to have developed along the strike and joints in the rock generally heading northeast before turning east. We had to stop at a point where there was deep water. Time was running out. It was about 5pm on our forth trip to Gua Lo Po Sang and we had a long way to go just to get out. It was 3am before we reached our car. According to the survey, the vertical distance of this cave is about 135m.

### **Gua Baba**

Gua Baba on the other hand is a relatively flat cave with several flooded chambers. These chambers were once kept dry by miners using pumps, allowing them

to work the bottom. After these caves were abandoned, the chambers flooded. Old wooden walkways were found in some of these chambers that were built right across them. It must have been quite perilous walking on these walkways when these chambers were dry. Falling off them would certainly kill a person. We much prefer having the water!

Where the walkways had rotted away, we had to swim across. Some passages required us to balance precariously on old wooded beams which we hoped wouldn't break under our weight. Some did! A beautiful stream passage with short waterfalls was encountered next. Here a dry higher-level bypass was found. A useful passage should the stream rise in flood. The stream passage continues until a place called "long bridge". Here, another wooden walkway was built across larger and longer flooded chambers. A steel gate was found just beyond and we stopped our exploration. We were out of time, tired and cold and didn't relish getting wet again swimming through another flooded passage.

### **Reconnecting the Caves**

At about 7 pm on 16 April 1999, we entered Gua Baba determined to connect Gua Lo Po Sang and Gua Baba. We arrived at the "gate" near the last point of our survey at about 9pm. We continued our survey in the water, half swimming and half clambering over rickety wooden beams. We came to a point where we could neither swim - due to debris in the water, nor could we walk on the old rotten walkway. We practically crawled over what was left of the walkway finally stepping on solid ground near a junction. The right passage with a stream was small and didn't seem to be a major passage so we elected to take the left passage although we knew this passage was heading to wrong way if it were to connect to Lo Po Sang. We were hoping it would start turning west soon.

The passage continued south and we were rather pleased when the main passage did start to head west. We were even more excited when we noticed the passage taking the character of the passage at the last point of our survey in Gua Lo Po Sang. There was an old wooden walkway above deep water. At this point, I saw several features beyond which looked exactly like what I remembered from Gua Lo Po Sang. I shouted for joy but my buddy Ron wasn't as sure as I was. He thought I was going crazy due to spending too much time in the cave. We surveyed hurriedly

and I scrambled, still balancing on the wooden beam, till I got to solid ground again. I rushed forward and on the left was, as I expected, a flowstone with a calcited ladder that confirmed we were already in Lo Po Sang. The celebration started! Drinks were out. The cold water from our drinking bottle was as good as champagne and the soaked raisins tasted like caviar! We had chocolates and muesli bars to top it all up.

From my logbook entries, the rediscovery of the connection was accomplished at precisely 11:05pm, Friday April 1999. The connecting passages were surveyed to 223m and during the same trip, another 233m of passages were surveyed south from Lo Po Sang. The confirmation of a connection between Gua Baba and Gua Lo Po Sang

meant that the total surveyed length of this system now stands at 2,934m. This system is named the Wang Mu Streamway.

### More?

There are many more caves in the area and much work needs to be done in order to systematically explore and survey the caves. A complete survey of the caves would lead to a better understanding of the mining history and uncover what we suspect is the longest cave system in Peninsular Malaysia and among the longest in region. Both Gua Lo Po Sang and Gua Baba have many side passages that await exploration.

## Gua Lanno Trip Report Robert P. July 2007

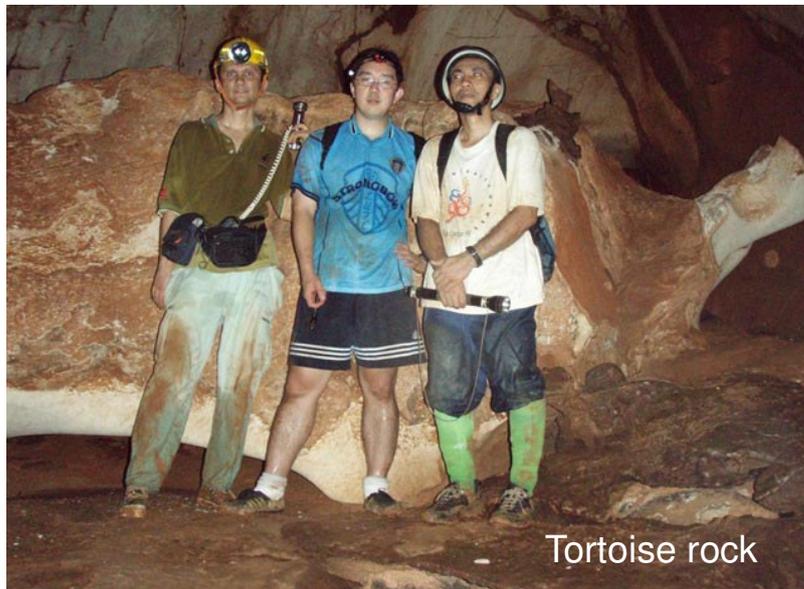
A small group of us set off towards Gua Lanno after parking at the Kwong Fook Nam Temple. We had to walk for about 1 km to reach the cave entrance. To get into the main chamber of the cave, we crawled through a narrow passage after walking up a short incline. Upon entering the main chamber we were assailed by a flying creature. It made clicking noises as it 'dive-bombed' us, sometimes coming to within inches of our face. At first we thought it was a bat but when we finally got a better look at it, we saw that it was a bird. It was some sort of swallow or swift that was probably nesting in the cave. The audible clicking we heard must be it's own version of echo-location to navigate in the darkness of the cave.

The main chamber is quite large, about 40 x 20 m wide and has some large columns. At one end is a small pool surrounded by brilliant white calcite formations and helictites. An opening to the south of this chamber leads deeper

into the cave. From here, a short branch to the left leads to a small area where sparkling calcite crystals dot the whole surface. In a dim light, it gives the impression of looking at a beautiful star filled night sky. The 3 dimensional effect of the sparkles makes you feel that you could reach out and catch a few stars in your hands!

To proceed further into the cave, we had to wade through a short narrow passage where the water is knee deep. Nearby is an area with many round calcite 'pebbles' coloured brown by the mud. Then we had to get down on our knees as the passage ahead was less than a metre in height. This led to another chamber with many columns. There are 3 large columns rising above 5m to the ceiling. There are also many columns and stalagmites that are

only a few inches in diameter but a few metres long. One stalagmite, about 1.5m tall, looked like the raised head of a Cobra ready to strike! Curtain formations also adorned some of the walls in this chamber. The deepest part of the cave is the Tortoise chamber where a huge rock in the shape of a giant



Tortoise rock

tortoise sits in the middle of the chamber.

Apart from the usual cave crickets and whip spiders, we also came across some white millipedes about 6cm long, white spiders and a large grey spider about 8cm across. In one narrow passage, a colony of bats were found roosting.

## Cave News

### Giant Crystal Cave Comes to Light

by Stefan Lovgren and Ted Chamberlain for National Geographic News (9/4/2007)

Geologist Juan Manuel García-Ruiz calls it "the Sistine Chapel of crystals," but Superman could call it home.

Mexico's Cueva de los Cristales (Cave of Crystals) contains some of the world's largest known natural crystals—translucent beams of gypsum as long as 36 feet (11 meters). How did the crystals reach such superheroic proportions?

In the new issue of the journal *Geology*, Geologist García-Ruiz reports that for millennia the crystals thrived in the cave's extremely rare and stable natural environment. Temperatures hovered consistently around a steamy 58 degrees Celsius, and the cave was filled with mineral-rich water that drove the crystals' growth.

Modern-day mining operations exposed the natural wonder by pumping water out of the 30-by-90-foot (10-by-30-meter) cave, which was found in 2000 near the town of Delicias (Chihuahua state map). Now García-Ruiz is advising the mining company to preserve the caves.

"There is no other place on the planet," García-Ruiz said, "where the mineral world reveals itself in such beauty."

#### Giant Crystals



### Sacred Cave of Rome's Founders Discovered, Archaeologists Say.

Maria Cristina Valsecchi in Rome for National Geographic News

Archaeologists say they have unearthed Lupercale—the sacred cave where, according to legend, a she-wolf nursed the twin founders of Rome and where the city itself was born. The long-lost underground chamber was found beneath the remains of Emperor Augustus' palace on the Palatine, a 70-meter-tall hill in the center of the city. Archaeologists from the Department of Cultural Heritage of the Rome Municipality came across the 15-meter-deep cavity while working to restore the decaying palace.

"We were drilling the ground near Augustus'



residence to survey the foundations of the building when we discovered the cave," said Irene Iacopi, the archaeologist in charge of the area. "We knew from ancient reports that the Lupercale shouldn't be far from the Emperor's palace, but we didn't expect to find it. It was a lucky surprise."

"We didn't enter the cave but took some photos with a probe," Iacopi added. "They show a richly decorated vault encrusted with mosaics and seashells, too rich to be part of a home. That's why we think it could be the ancient sanctuary, but we can't be sure until we find the entrance to the chamber."

According to myth, Lupercale is where a she-wolf suckled Romulus and Remus, the twin sons of the war god Mars and mortal priestess Rhea Silvia, who had been abandoned in a cradle on the bank of the Tiber River. The cave's name, in fact, comes from the Latin word for wolf, *lupus*. The brothers are said to have later founded Rome on April 21, 753 B.C., at the site. But they eventually fought for the leadership of the new city, and Romulus killed his brother.

## Register for your trips

Registration is crucial for the safety of the participants as sufficient equipment needs to be prepared for each trip. We also need to know the number of members coming, as the trip may be cancelled if there are too few participants. Registration can be done thru email or by calling the MKS office. Contact info is located on the last page of this newsletter.

## COMING TRIPS

### Waterfall near Pos Slim

18 November 2007, Sunday

There is a beautiful waterfall located a few kilometres from Pos Slim. The water cascades down over huge rocks from about 100metres up. At the base are a few pools where you can soak in the clear, cool water. We will park at the roadside and walk in about 2 km to reach the falls. It is a good spot for photography and nature appreciation.

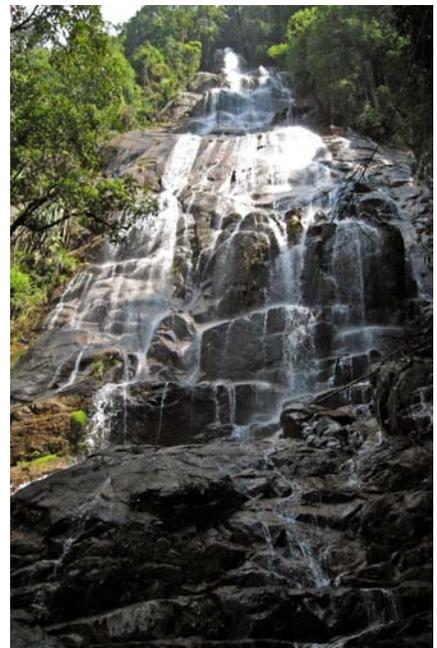
Meet at	Coffee shop opposite the Simpang Pulai Police Station
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Time	9.00 a.m.
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Duration	4 hours
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Challenge rating	★★☆☆☆
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Pos Slim waterfall



### Perak Man Archeological site , Lenggong

Mid December 2007

Caves are not just for exploration and surveying. Archeology is also an important part of Speleology. Perak Man is estimated to be about 10-11 thousand years old and is among the oldest human remains found in Malaysia. To put it in perspective, the more famous skeletal remains found at Niah 40,000 years old. Although more recent, Lenggong is among the most important archaeological site in Peninsular Malaysia.

We plan to visit both the Museum and the archeological site at Gua Gunung Runtuh on the first day and explore a few wild caves nearby on the second day. Accommodation will be at the nearby Rest House. The full program will be finalized at a later date. This overnight trip is scheduled for around mid December 2007. Estimated cost of the trip would be no more than RM150 per person and will include all fees, accommodation and meals. Transport to Lenggong will be by car pooling and the expense will be shared among passangers so, pay the driver / car owner. Those who want to book a place or get more information, please contact Ronn at 019 445 6578 or Hymeir at 019 442 8926 or email to hymeir@gmail.com

Bones of Perak Man



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See us online at

[www.mykarst.org](http://www.mykarst.org)

*Views and opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the Executive Committee of the Society.*

## more Cave News

From Dive magazine 06/03/07

### Divers discover world's longest underwater cave

Two cave divers say they have discovered the world's longest underwater cave while exploring Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. Briton Stephen Bogaerts and his German dive buddy Robbie Schmittner found a connection between the Nohoich Nah Chich caves and the Sac Actun system, which together measure 153 kilometres in length. Bogaerts and Schmittner spent four years exploring the Yucatán caves using scooters to find the connection between the two caves, marking each new area with labelled ropes. The pair finally uncovered the cave link at the end of January after they entered two different sections and eventually met.



That connection shows that many of those seemingly isolated watering holes are part of a single larger system,' said Bogaerts. 'It was like putting up a flag up on Everest.'

Up until now, the longest known submerged cave system was the 145km-long Ox Bel Ha system in Mexico.

### Membership Application / Renewal Form

Membership renewal: You are only required to fill in fields indicated by an asterisk (\*), unless there is (are) change(s).

Name (\*) \_\_\_\_\_

IC / Passport \_\_\_\_\_ Membership No (\*) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Post code \_\_\_\_\_

Tel (O) \_\_\_\_\_ Tel (H) \_\_\_\_\_

Tel (H/P) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

APPLICATION  RENEWAL Signature(\*) \_\_\_\_\_

Payment: Cash / Cheque / Bank In (RHB A/C: 2-58066-00001593)

Ordinary Member - subscription RM30.00 per annum (Malaysian citizens / voting member)

Associate Member - subscription RM 20.00 per annum (non-Malaysian citizens / non-voting member)

Life Member - RM500.00 (one single payment)

**Send this form with payment to MKS.** Please make cheques payable to Persatuan Karst Malaysia.