

First century iron industry site found in Kedah
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The discovery of an iron industry site in Jeniang, Kedah, believed to be built during the era of Kedah Tua (Government of Old Kedah), is new proof that the country's early population were economically advanced and had ventured into the iron industry.

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Archeology Centre director Dr Mokhtar Saidin said the latest findings by USM archeologists also proved that the iron and manufacturing industries were the foundation for economic growth in Lembah Bujang.

"We found an iron industry site believed to have been built as early as in the first century in Kampung Gading, Jeniang and we believe it was part of the Kedah Tua government centre in Lembah Bujang," he told Bernama in Penang today.

He said this followed the discovery of industrial waste in Sungai Batu, Lembah Bujang last year, but the condition of the furnaces excavated in the area was unclear as most of the artefacts found were already ruined.

"After conducting research for over a year, we have now found 10 complete and clear sites of iron melting workshops in Kampung Gading, about 30km from Sungai Batu," he said.

Mokhtar said excavation work carried out by the archeologists at the ancient industrial site found seven round-shaped iron furnaces as well as the tuyere, a tube or nozzle through which air was blown into the furnace.

He said the latest findings had also added new facts about the Lembah Bujang civilisation centre.

Valley a 'developed industrial area'

"Besides being a religious centre following the discovery of shrines of over 1,500 years old, Lembah Bujang was actually a developed industrial area."

Following the discovery, he said, the archeologists now suggested that the size of the Sungai Batu civilisation centre in Lembah Bujang actually covered an area over 1,000 sq metres compared to 400 sq metres previously thought.

"We are also in the midst of locating the settlement and cemetery areas from that civilisation which are believed to be at the same site," he said.

Mokhtar said the findings would be tabled at the International Conference on Lembah Bujang and Early Civilisation in Southeast Asia organised by the USM Archeology Centre and National Heritage Department in Kuala Lumpur next week.

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