

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Researchers unlock the mineral riches of SE Asia

Research being carried out at CODES (the Australian Research Council's Centre of Excellence in Ore Deposits at the University of Tasmania) is helping mining companies pinpoint mineral-rich ore deposits in previously unexplored areas of SE Asia.

The team has built on years of University-based research to make major advances to the geological knowledge of the region and significantly expand the scope and geographical footprint of earlier studies.

The methods used included the collection of extensive mineral samples, gathered during the numerous and widespread field trips within the region. These samples were then analysed back at the University, using CODES' state of the art equipment and unique analytical techniques.

The research results have recently been published in a special issue of *Gondwana Research* titled 'Tectonics and Metallogeny of Mainland SE Asia.'

The publication includes 14 papers contributed by researchers from CODES and the University Discipline of Earth Sciences.

"Our main aims are to provide mining companies with a greater understanding of the formation and evolution of the ore deposits in the region and, most importantly, where they are located," said project leader Professor Khin Zaw.

The researchers used a range of geochemical studies, including a unique method developed by CODES' researchers for establishing the age of ore bodies containing gold, lead, zinc and copper. These studies allowed them to build a pool of knowledge relating to the origins and contents of the region's ore bodies, which is proving invaluable to mining companies as they seek to home in on specific types of mineral-rich deposits.

Professor Zaw believes that this research will play an important role in unlocking the wealth of a region that has the potential to be one of the drivers of the rapid economic development within Asia.

He added "there is no doubt that we are in the Asian Century and, as a result, mining in SE Asia is expanding very quickly. This is mainly being fuelled by increasing demand for mineral commodities from powerful neighbours such as China, Korea, Japan, and India.

“However, even with this level of expansion, mining companies are struggling to meet demand.

“Therefore, they are keen to finance further exploration. As our research enhances exploration efficiencies, and greatly improves the chances of discovering world class deposits, we are confident that it will attract more interest and funding to enable us to continue our studies.

“Even though we have greatly expanded the geological knowledge of the region, it is an area that still contains so much untapped potential through its vast and diverse range of mineral deposits,” said Professor Zaw.

“There is so much more still to be learned and discovered.”

This research was made possible through financial support from the Australian Research Council and ten international mining companies.

The special issue is available online at:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/1342937X/26/1>

For more information about CODES, please visit: <http://www.utas.edu.au/codes/>

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