15.0 INTRODUCTION

Peninsular Malaysia was the pre-eminent tin mining region of the world until the industry crisis following the collapse of tin price in 1985. At the peak of the mining, the ore was smelted in Penang, the daily tin price set there, and posted above the long bar at the Royal Ipoh Club in the heart of the great Kinta Valley. Rapid decline in price and demand, as plastic replaced tin plate, caused near extinction of the industry and the great placer tinfields and their tailings were built upon by housing estates. Many of the tailings had already been reworked as separation techniques became more efficient. Increase in price to RM 32.77 per kilogram in December 2004 has only slightly revived the industry, but Malaysia may well take a lead from the ongoing revival in Cornwall.

Tungsten was never as important as tin, and mining came to an end much earlier. Iron was extracted at two large and remote mines and elsewhere iron is presently produced on a limited scale. Bauxite was mined at Pengerang on the southern tip of the Peninsula but is now in severe decline.

Gold continues to be mined. Placer workings were numerous. Lode mining continues to be important immediately to the east of the Bentong–Raub Suture Zone.

15.1 RECENT MINING DEVELOPMENTS

The 2004 mining developments were reviewed by Azemi and Salmiah (2007), and are summarised below:

Perak: There were ten mines (gravel pump and opencast) that produced a total of 2,153 t of tin in 2004. Twenty amang treatment plants recovered ilmenite, monazite, zircon, stouverite and rutile. Fourteen mines in the district of Batang Padang produced a total of 220,737 t of kaolin. Two mines near Bidor produced 136,000 t of mica.

Selangor: Five opencast mines produced a total 392 t of tin in 2004. There were five amang treatment plants.

Johor: Bauxite continued to be mined in two localities at Telok Ramunia, Pengerang, but total output has dramatically declined to only 1,680 t in 2003. Two mines produced a total of 33 t of tin in 2004. Three mines produced a total of 44,225 t of kaolin in 2004.

Pahang: Five gold mines produced a total of 4,181 t of gold in 2004. Four iron mines produced a total of 313,822 t of iron ore. Two mines produced a total of 146 t of tin in 2004. One mine produced 36,000 t of kaolin.

Terengganu: Two iron mines produced 196,910 t of iron ore in 2004. The single gold mine at Sungai Kerak produced 1.122 t of gold but closed in late 2004.

Kelantan: In 2004 there were four gold mines, but only one remained operating at the end of the year. Total production in 2004 was 38.182 t of gold.

15.2 REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF TIN

The cratonic core of peninsular Sundaland was the source of more than 70% of the tin mined last century in the whole world. The major producing centres lay in a broad arc 3400 km long and up to 800 km wide. The distribution of tin is strongly heterogeneous, with six major centres accounting for over 75% of the mined output. The balance comes from a further fourteen minor fields (Fig. 15.1).

The tinfields fall into two distinct types, those where virtually all the production was derived from mining placers, and those with a significant deep mined production. The former are by far the larger and the first four fields (Fig. 15.1) fall into this group. They were the unique feature of the region and the reason for its former dominance in world production. The larger and