

**KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN**  
**TARIKH: 18 OGOS 2014 (ISNIN)**

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## What El Nino? It is not even here yet

By Alexander Winifred  
alexander@mmail.com.my

PETALING JAYA — The El Nino phenomenon, which was initially projected to hit Malaysian shores last month may not arrive anytime soon.

Meteorological Department deputy director-general Alui Bahari said there was still no concrete indication the phenomenon was about to begin.

"In fact, the chance of El Nino occurring within this few months is only 60 per cent," said Alui.

Alui said for an El Nino occurrence to be confirmed, observations should show a sea surface temperature of above 0.5°C over a period of five months consecutively.

"Right now, the surface temperature is fluctuating and is still below 0.5°C," he said.

Universiti Malaya Sabah environmental science expert Professor Justin Sentian concurred with Alui, saying there were no signs of El Nino.

"The main indicator of El Nino is a continuous trend in which the surface temperature increases over a long period, usually five months.

"If it goes up and down like it is now, that means El Nino has not occurred,"

he said.

Justin likened the current situation to the episode in 2012 when the scientific community was baffled by El Nino's no-show, saying it was difficult to predict El Nino.

"Although there are occasional signs that El Nino may occur, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when it will begin.

"Even we scientists do not actually understand when it will happen," he said.

"However, we know for sure it will happen, either this year or next year, because El Nino occurs in a cycle.

"When it happens, it will bring a significant change in temperature, especially throughout countries bordering the Equator," he said.

Earlier this month, the International Research Institute for Climate and Society and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released a statement saying model forecasts had slightly delayed the El Nino onset, with most forecasters expected the phenomenon to begin from August to October and continuing into early 2015.

The last time El Nino occurred was from 2009 to 2010.

Meanwhile, the department's National Weather Centre has forecast isolated thunderstorms throughout Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Selangor, and a host of other states throughout this week.

KERATAN AKHBAR  
HARIAN METRO (BISNES): MUKA SURAT 44  
TARIKH: 18 OGOS 2014 (ISNIN)



**MENTERI** Perdagangan Antarabangsa dan Industri, Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed (tengah) menyaksikan pertukaran dokumen antara Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif Biotech Corp, Dr Mohd Nazlee Kamal (kiri) dan Agil.

**Kuala Lumpur:** Generasi Muda Berjaya (GMB) Malaysia akan membantu sehingga 500 individu berminat menyertai bidang perniagaan melalui program Tunas Usahawan Bumiputera (Tube) yang bakal dilancarkan November ini.

Presidennya, Agil Faisal Ahmad Fadzil berkata, program itu yang memberi tumpuan kepada golongan muda diwujudkan bagi memberi ruang kepada lebih ramai usahawan baru memulakan perniagaan.

“Program ini terbuka kepada golongan belia yang ingin memulakan perniagaan dan ia tidak terhad kepada industri

tertentu,” katanya selepas memeterai perjanjian kerjasama dengan Malaysian Biotechnology Corporation Sdn Bhd (Biotech Corp) di sini, baru-baru ini.

Menurutnya, untuk program itu, individu terpilih akan diberikan geran memulakan perniagaan RM15,000 dan untuk tujuan ini, kerajaan melalui Kementerian Perdagangan Antarabangsa dan Industri (MITI) memperuntukkan sehingga RM10 juta.

“Program ini dijalankan selama dua minggu di mana pada minggu pertama, peserta didedahkan dengan segmen motivasi dan ketahanan diri diikuti dengan

teknik asas perniagaan.

“GMB memainkan peranan tunjuk ajar cara membuat plan perniagaan termasuk teknik membuat pembentangan kertas kerja,” katanya.

Menurutnya, selain program Tube, pihaknya turut menjalin kerjasama dengan Biotech Corp untuk membantu usahawan yang berminat menjalankan perniagaan berkaitan bioteknologi.

“Melalui program ini, Biotech Corp akan membantu individu khususnya graduan berminat dengan mencari tanah bagi dibangunkan projek bioteknologi,” katanya.

# Malaysia must capitalise on silicon demand

## RETHINK STRATEGY:

Country should be more aggressive in upstream and downstream sectors of electronics business

**M**ANY may not be aware that the humble sand is the most important starting raw material for the electronic gadgets to which the world has become addicted.

These are also the gadgets that have been the subject of much debate over their sometimes negative social impact. While here we quarrel over the mining rights for sand to sell to the construction industry, in many countries, the sand business is more to do with the extraction of silica from sand to produce silicon.

This is not much different from the tin mining that fuelled the nation's growth in the 1960s and 1970s. And just like tin those days, the silicon ingots produced now

command very lucrative prices in the world market.

The reason is simple. Without silicon, it is virtually impossible for the world to continue churning out the many sophisticated electronic products that we enjoy. The demand for such products is expected to continue growing.

Semiconductors have, no doubt, become a major global business.

The latest estimate suggests that the international business may have exceeded US\$300 billion (RM946 billion). If semiconductors are the building blocks of consumer electronics, including PCs, mobile phones and MP3 players, then silicon is what makes semiconductors tick.

A semiconductor is described as a solid silicon material whose electrical conductivity is between that of a metal and an insulator. Such a property has proven to be useful in the production of integrated circuits, which deliver the electronic functions in consumers' devices.

Over the years, Malaysia has attracted many prominent world-class semiconductor companies. These are the likes of Freescale, Intel and others. In fact, for more than a decade now, we have our

own Silterra to participate in the global semiconductor business.

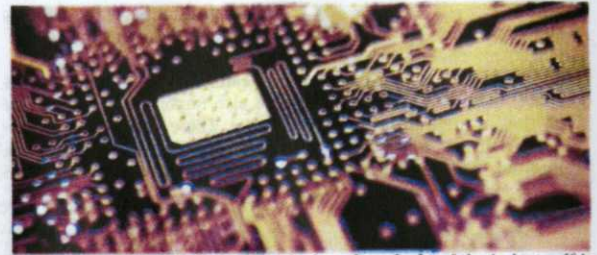
It has not been easy for a small player like Silterra to do business in this highly competitive industry. But, thanks to the support of the government and our earlier investment in the right human talent, the company has made commendable inroads in the global market. Even the research and development they

do is world-class.

A chat with the chief executive officer confirmed that after the uncertainties of the last many years, the next few years promised better days for the company. This is happening despite the volatility of the business.

It has been reported that while the current 20-year annual average growth of the semiconductor industry is at the order of 13 per cent, this has been accompanied by equally above-average market volatility, which has led to significant, if not dramatic, cyclical swings. The industry has gone through six major cycles since the 1970s, caused mainly from worldwide recession, overcapacity and inventory difficulties.

The last major semiconductor downturn occurred in 2000-2002.



Malaysia can benefit from the whole value chain of the industry if it capitalises on the shift in market interest.

This was the harshest contraction the industry had ever experienced. Global semiconductor sales plummeted from more than US\$200 billion in 2000 to US\$160 billion in 2001 and 2002. Semiconductor revenue had, however, recovered since January 2002.

On the other hand, it has been reported that the US\$300 billion semiconductor industry generated more than US\$1.5 trillion in the electronic systems business and US\$5 trillion in services, representing close to 10 per cent of the world's gross domestic product.

Demand for consumer electronics, including PCs, digital televisions and iPods, is strongly correlated with the semiconductor demand. As PCs inch closer to saturation in developed countries, demand for them and, consequently, the chips will decrease

in such markets. This is why there is now a shift in market interest to developing economies.

Malaysia is well-positioned to capitalise on the market change. Silterra is especially well-positioned for this. But, we should widen our interest beyond just producing semiconductors, as in Silterra. We should venture upstream to produce refined silicon ingots from the high-quality sand that we have. It has been reported that all this while, we have been exporting our high-purity silica to Japan for the production of silicon ingots, which are then sold back to us to make chips.

This has to change. We should even look to developing more aggressively the downstream sector of the electronics business. Only then can we truly benefit from the whole value chain of the industry.



Dr Ahmad Ibrahim is fellow of the Academy of Sciences Malaysia

## Stop Lynas from building road using rare earth waste, Pahang reps urged

**KUANTAN:** The Save Malaysia, Stop Lynas (SMSL) group has called on Pahang assemblymen not to allow Lynas to build a road to demonstrate the safe use of its rare earth processing waste.

SMSL chairman Tan Bun Teet said the company's proposal to build the road was not in line with common practice.

"This is because all tests and experiments on the use of rare earth processing waste should be undertaken before the refinery is set up in the first place.

"We call on all assemblymen to urge the Pahang government not to allow the road to be built in our state," he said at a gathering to hand over a memorandum to six assemblymen and Kuantan PKR MP Fuziah Salleh here yesterday.

In the Lynas second quarterly report, the company had stated that it was preparing to seek the Department of Environment's approval for the road's construction using the "water leach purification" product.

However, it was not mentioned where the road would be built.

Tan also said a proposal by Lynas to recycle its neutralisation underflow product into enhancer fertiliser would have been beneficial for the company and the country.

But, unfortunately, there were still no supporting data and studies on it, he said.

"As long as there are no details and data on this synthetic product for the scrutiny of agriculture experts, we urge the state government not to allow it to be used in any farms in Pahang," he added.