

Learning Inspirations

LEARNING LINK JAN-MAR 26

E-Waste: The 2026 Gold Mine in Our Hands

Most of us have seen it—the "junk corner" in the office or the factory store room filled with old laptops, monitors, and a mess of tangled cables. For a long time, we just saw this as a bit of a storage headache. But as of February 2026, the way Malaysia looks at this "rubbish" has completely changed.

With the **Customs (Prohibition of Imports) Order 2023** now in full effect, there is an absolute ban on bringing e-waste into the country. This isn't just a win for the environment; it's a massive shift for our economy. It means we have to stop relying so much on imported materials and start looking at what we've already got. This is what people are calling "Urban Mining," and it's quickly becoming a major part of how we do business in Malaysia today.

1. Why it's actually a "Gold Mine"

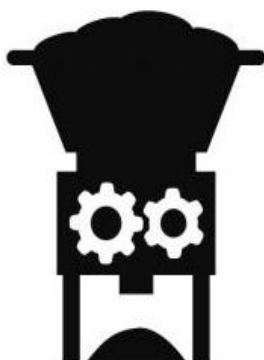
The term "Gold Mine" isn't an exaggeration. When we think of mining, we think of massive holes in the ground, but the data from the **United Nations Global E-waste Monitor** shows that the real value is in our hardware.

In a traditional gold mine, you might have to dig up a tonne of rock just to get a few grams of gold. It's a lot of work for a very small return. However, if you take a tonne of high-grade circuit boards—the kind we find in our servers and professional equipment—you can get up to 800 times more gold than you'd find in that same tonne of raw ore.



When you add in the copper, silver, and palladium, it's clear that these old machines are actually concentrated deposits of wealth. In a world where raw material prices are constantly jumping around due to global issues, having a local source of these metals is a huge advantage. It's about building a supply chain that's much more stable because it starts right here at home.

2. Shredding: Where Security Meets Value



One question that often comes up is: *Why do we need to shred everything?* If we want the gold, why not just take the machines apart? In a professional environment, it's never that simple because of the data.

In 2026, simply "wiping" a hard drive doesn't meet the security standards we need. A discarded drive is a massive liability if it's not handled properly. This is where **Industrial Shredding** comes in—it's the point where security meets resource recovery.

By shredding the hardware into tiny pieces, we achieve two things at once:

- **Total Security:** We ensure that sensitive corporate data and intellectual property are physically destroyed and can never be recovered.

Learning Inspirations

- **Easier Recovery:** Once the machine is shredded into small "fractions," it's much easier for recyclers to use magnets and chemical processes to separate the gold and copper from the plastic and glass.

By following international standards like **TAPA (Transported Asset Protection Association)**, we ensure there's a proper "Chain of Custody." Shredding is basically the first step of the refining process—it protects the company's past data while reclaiming the materials for the future.

3. The Shift in Customer Expectations

We're also seeing a big change in what the Malaysian public expects. Whether it's in retail or services, customers are much more clued-in now. They aren't just looking at the price tag; they're asking what happens to the product when they're finished with it.

This is why "**Product Stewardship**" is becoming such a big deal. Brands are starting to realise that they need to provide an easy way for customers to return old tech. A great example is the partnership between **Pos Malaysia and local licensed recyclers**. They've set up e-waste collection points in over 1,000 post offices nationwide.



The idea is simple: **make it easy for people to do the right thing**. When a company takes responsibility for its waste, it builds a lot of trust. In 2026, being "green" isn't just a PR move; it's a core part of how you keep your customers loyal.

4. The EV Connection: More than Just Laptops

While we often focus on IT hardware, the "Urban Mine" is rapidly expanding. With the recent national shift toward Electric Vehicles (EVs) the management of large-scale lithium-ion batteries has become a major talking point.



An EV battery requires significantly more copper and cobalt than a traditional car, making the "end-of-life" recovery of these units a critical economic priority. Whether it is a server from our data centre or a battery pack from a company fleet, the goal remains the same: ensuring these high-value materials stay within the Malaysian circular economy rather than ending up as a hazardous

liability.

4. National Strategy: The RMK-13 Framework

Finally, we have to look at the national direction. Under the **Thirteenth Malaysia Plan (RMK-13)**, the government has made the **Circular Economy** a key strategy within its environmental goals.

The government's massive push for local EV manufacturing (as seen in the **National Automotive Policy**) is completely dependent on a stable



Learning Inspirations

supply of battery materials. By keeping copper, cobalt, and precious metals within our own borders through "Urban Mining," Malaysia is building a buffer against global supply chain shocks. We aren't just recycling to be "green"—we are sourcing the raw materials needed to power our next generation of vehicles. The copper we recover today from an old server room might be the very same material used in the motor of a Malaysian-made EV next year.

At the end of the day, being "circular" is just about being efficient and making sure that nothing of value is ever truly lost. As we move through 2026, the "Gold Mine" of the future isn't a new territory we have to find—it's a resource we have to manage with professional discipline right here in our own offices.

Resources:

<https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2520168>

<https://bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2417807#:~:text=ERTH%20provides%20clients%20with%20Certificates,for%20companies%20handling%20sensitive%20information.>

<https://www.investkl.gov.my/insights/spotlight-greater-kl/erth-a-case-study-on-the-e-waste-recycling-revolution-in-greater-kl#:~:text=In%202024%2C%20ERTH%20extended%20this,29%20tonnes%20of%20e-waste.>

<https://ittech-pulse.com/industry-insights/how-e-waste-became-a-goldmine-for-urban-miners/>

<https://www.bernama.com/en/general/news.php?id=2520168>

https://rmk13.ekonomi.gov.my/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/PamphletRMK_16102025.pdf

https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-AoQQn_pUBlo/XqNCV97A8II/AAAAAAAAAAQ/J-2qXWenqA9a7exwdMqLVBnxRqrFSjMQCLcBGAsYHQ/w1200-h630-p-k-no-nu/what-is-e-waste.jpg

<https://www.pos.com.my/sustainability/pos-green/waste-management/pos-erth-partnership>

<https://associationofresearch.org/10-ways-to-take-sustainability-to-the-next-level/>

<https://www.vecteezy.com/free-vector/electric-car>