Economic and Social Council

**Tenth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**
New York, 31 July – 9 August 2012
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of
geographical names since the Ninth Conference
(for distribution only).**

National Activities on Standardization of Malaysia Geographical Names

Submitted by Malaysia **

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

   This report from Malaysia covers the period since the Ninth Conference and includes all activities relating to geographical names, the progress reports on the Working Groups, projects undertaken and other related matters.

2. **BACKGROUND**

   The Malaysian National Committee on Geographical Names (MNCGN), established on 11 September 2002 by the Malaysian Cabinet, is responsible to coordinate geographical naming activities in Malaysia. This committee is chaired by the Director General of Survey and Mapping Malaysia (JUPEM) with its members consisting of representatives from Federal and State agencies. One (1) Technical Committee and three (3) Working Groups were established to assist the MNCGN as follows:
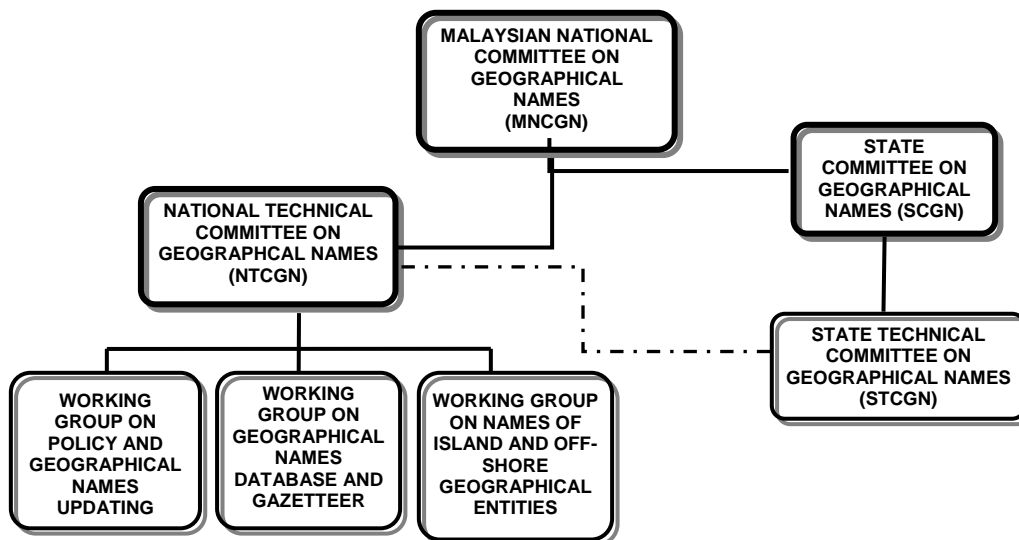
   i.   National Technical Committee on Geographical Names (NTCGN);
   ii.   Working Group on Policy and Geographical Names Updating (new working group which replaced previous working group, called Working Group on Guidelines for Determination of Geographical Names);
   iii. Working Group on Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer; and
   iv.   Working Group on Names of Island and Off-Shore Geographical Entities.

   At the State level, the State Committee on Geographical Names (SCGN) was established to coordinate and implement the guidelines and procedures formulated by MNCGN. This committee is chaired by the State Secretary or the Secretary General of the Federal Territories Ministry (for Federal Territories) and its members comprise of representatives from state or federal agencies. At the state level, the State Technical Committee on Geographical Names (STCGN) was also established to assist the SCGN.

   The responsibilities of MNCGN encompass the following tasks:

   i)   Formulating national guidelines for the determination of geographical names;
   ii) Developing the National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer;
   iii) Promoting the use of official names; and
   iv) Coordinating the input of national nomenclature activities with those at the international level, including serving as liaison to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), particularly with the Regional Grouping.

The existing organizational structure of MNCGN is as shown below:

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                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │  MALAYSIAN NATIONAL  │
                    │    COMMITTEE ON      │
                    │    GEOGRAPHICAL      │
                    │       NAMES          │
                    │      (MNCGN)         │
                    └──────────────────────┘
                               │
            ┌──────────────────┴──────────┐
            │                             │
  ┌───────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
  │ NATIONAL TECHNICAL│        │      STATE       │
  │   COMMITTEE ON    │        │   COMMITTEE ON   │
  │ GEOGRAPHCAL NAMES │        │   GEOGRAPHICAL   │
  │      (NTCGN)      │        │   NAMES (SCGN)   │
  └───────────────────┘        └──────────────────┘
       │                                 │
  ┌────┼────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
  │    │    │              │  STATE TECHNICAL     │
                           │   COMMITTEE ON       │
                           │ GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES   │
                           │      (STCGN)         │
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| WORKING GROUP ON POLICY AND GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES UPDATING | WORKING GROUP ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES DATABASE AND GAZETTEER | WORKING GROUP ON NAMES OF ISLAND AND OFF-SHORE GEOGRAPHICAL ENTITIES |

Terms of reference for MNCGN are as follows:
  i) To study and establish criteria used to determine official geographical names in the national interest;
  ii) To study and formulate the Guidelines for the Formation of the National Geographical Names Database;
  iii) To determine whether the objectives, functions and output of activities are in line with the requirements of the government and country;
  iv) To study and establish the methodologies for the activities of the on-line Geographical Names, National Gazetteer, National Standard Document and other activities relating to geographical names; and
  v) To collaborate with the National Mapping and Spatial Data Committee, Technical Committee 2 (TC2) SIRIM and other committees connected with the formation of the national geographical information infrastructure.

3. ACTIVITIES

The MNCGN holds its meeting at least once a year. The Ninth Meeting was held on 3 November 2011 in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. Below are the related activities on geographical naming that were conducted during the period under review.

3.1 UNGEGN Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division (ASEPSWD) and Seminar on Geographical Names

Malaysia was elected as the Chair of UNGEGN ASEPSWD, for a period of five (5) years from August 2010 to August 2015 during the Seventeenth Meeting of Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division (ASEPSWD) in Sydney, Australia. In conjuction with the Eighteenth Meeting of UNGEGN ASEPSWD on 22 February 2011 in Kuala Lumpur, a Seminar on Geographical Names was held on 21 February 2011. During this

seminar, papers related to activities of geographical names were presented by local and international speakers. The participants were from local government agencies and local authorities. During the Nineteenth Divisional meeting in Manila on 28 February 2012, a seminar was also organised by the Philippines and attended by member countries from Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia.

3.2   National Technical Committee on Geographical Names Meeting

National Technical Committee on Geographical Names holds its Thirteenth Meeting on 3 May 2012 in Langkawi, Kedah. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Director General of Survey and Mapping Malaysia. During this meeting, the Working Groups and States Technical Committee presented their activities.

3.3   Toponymic Guidelines

In accordance with the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names resolution IV/4 (1982) on Publication of Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors and resolution V/14 (1987) Publication of Toponymic Guidelines, Malaysia had produced a Malay version of this guideline in 2005. The English version of this guideline named **Geographic Information – Guidelines for the Determination of Geographical Names** (Malaysian Standard 2256: 2009) was published in 2009 by Technical Committee on Geographic Information/Geomatics under the authority of the Industry Standards Committee on Information Technology, Telecommunication and Multimedia. This document will be presented to UNCSGN during the Tenth Conference in New York.

3.4   Websites on Geographical Names Activities in Malaysia
a) MNCGN Website
    The Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia (JUPEM) had launched the MNCGN Website named "MyGeoName" in July 2006 and the updating of the website is carried out regularly. This website can be accessed at http://www.jupem.gov.my/Geonames/splash.aspx in dual language that is in Malay language and in English language.
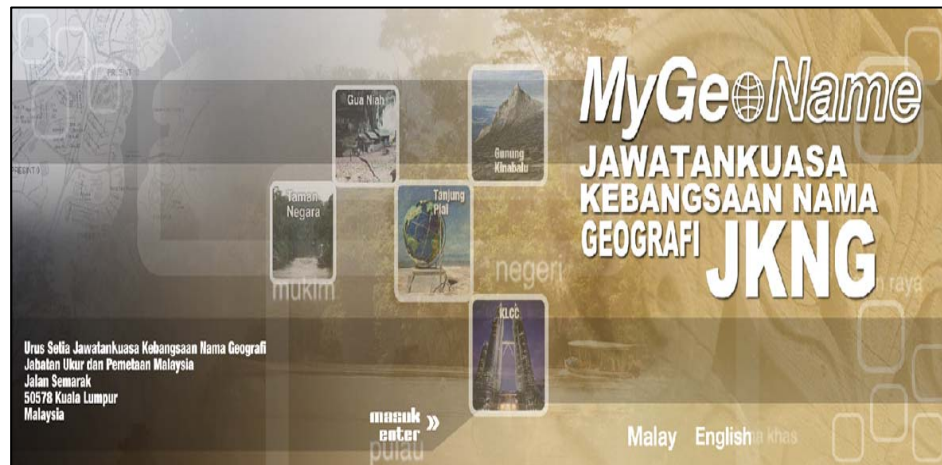
b) MyGeoName Application

MyGeoName application has been developed by Malaysian Centre for Geospatial Data Infrastructure (MaCGDI), which chair one of the three (3) Working Groups in MNCGN. This website can be accessed at http://www.mygeoportal.gov.my/en/575.aspx.

3.5 Geographical Names Database and Production of Web Gazetteer

The Malaysian Geographical Names Database consists of amongst others local names, locations, historical background and gazette notification available for government and public use.

The Working Group on Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer, chair by the Malaysian Centre for Geospatial Data Infrastructure (MaCGDI) was given the responsibility to develop the Malaysian Geographical Names Database and Web Gazetteer. The development of the database and gazetteer which involves the confirmation of geographic names by states authority based on topographic database at scales of 1:25 000 and 1:50 000, are near completion and awaiting for the publishing of the gazetteer which is targeted to be completed by year end. The next activity will involves the standardization of geographic names at 1:5 000 and 1:10 000 scale mostly covering the urban and developed areas.

This working group has appointed a Liaison Officer from each state to verify existing or propose any new names. In conducting this task, reference has to be made to gazettes, gazette plans, and circulars issued by all State Secretaries concerned, as they are the authorities for the naming of the geographic entities within their jurisdictions. Finally, geographic names that are proposed to be used must be tabled at the SCGN meeting before being officially approved and adopted.

3.6 Naming of Islands and Off-Shore Geographical Entities

The Working Group on Names of Islands and Off-Shore Geographical Entities was established on 20 June 2006 and is chair by the National Hydrography Centre (NHC).

The tasks of this Working Group are as follows:
i)   Carrying out surveys and researches as well as identifying and proposing the naming of islands and off-shore geographic entities which has no names. The proposed names will have to relate to the characteristics of hydrographic entities.
ii)   Identify and collect all related information of islands and off-shore geographic entities including from charts, gazettes, maps, agreements and related documents;
iii)   Documenting and updating the list of islands and geographical entities; and
iv)   Propose new names for existing islands and off-shore geographic entities related to the characteristic of geographical entities in accordance with the guidelines

for the Standardization of Undersea Feature Names produced by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO).

The status on documentation of Names of Islands and Off-Shore Geographical Entities for each state is as follows:

Status	Document	State
Published	Volume I (2nd Edition)	Kedah, Johor, Kelantan, Pahang, Terengganu, Labuan and Penang
	Volume II (2nd Edition)	Selangor, Perak, Melaka, Perlis and Negeri Sembilan
	Volume III (1st Edition)	Sabah
Waiting for State Authority approval	Volume IV	Sarawak

3.7 Workshop and Briefing

The objectives of the workshops and briefings were to disseminate information on Guideline on Determination of Geographical Names and to understand the procedure to use Geographical Names Database. It were also intended to help participants understand the importance of coordinated geographical naming and to populate the Geographical Names Database. These efforts ware expected to support the implementation of the Malaysian Geospatial Data Infrastructure (MyGDI) initiatives which is undertaken by the Malaysian Centre for Geospatial Data Infrastructure (MaCGDI).

The content of the workshops related to geographical names is as follows:
i)   Briefing on National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer by MaCGDI.
ii)   Briefing on Guidelines for the Determination of Geographical Names by JUPEM.
iii) Briefing on Names of Island and Off-Shore Geographic Entities by NHC.
iv)   Briefing on role of National Archives of Malaysia in development of National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer by National Archives of Malaysia.
v)   Briefing of procedures on collection of geographical names in the publication of Topographic map by JUPEM.
vi)   Demonstration on MyGeoName application.
vii) Hands-on training on updating of geographical names using Module on Verification of Geographical Names.

3.8 Computer Based Training for Geographic Naming

During National Technical Committee on Geographical Names meeting which was held on 7 November 2009 in Malacca, a proposal to develop a Computer Based Training (CBT) for geographic naming was agreed upon. The purpose of this CBT is to educate

and illustrates the significance of geographic naming in the country for officers from Federal Agencies, State Agencies and Local Authority.

The development of this CBT was completed and distributed to members during the National Technical Committee on Geographical Names Meeting in June 2011.

4. PROBLEM, SOLUTION AND ACHIEVEMENT

In developing and implementing the standardized usage of geographical names throughout the country, there were some issues encountered by MNCGN, amongst which are as follows:

4.1 Verification of The Geographical Names

In developing the Malaysian Geographical Names Database and Web Gazetteer, the concerned Working Group only obtained partial commitment from the SCGN, particularly with regards to the verification of geographical names. Some State Liaison Officers appointed to the SCGN were frequently transferred to other positions and this affected the needed continuity on the said work. Since procedures to verify geographical names were not properly documented new officers would face difficulties in carrying out their tasks.

In addressing this situation, State Working Groups had been formed by MaCGDI, whereby members among others comprise of an officer from MaCGDI and the State Liaison Officer. Any problem encountered was solved by State Working Groups collectively and completed work done was documented. In the case of the State Liaison Officer being transferred to another department, the State Working Group will acts as a mediator until a new State Liaison Officer is appointed by SCGN.

Besides that, this working group also developed the "offline geographical names database system". This system will help State Liaison Officer to update the geographical names database easier. Briefings will be given to the states on how to use the system. During briefing, each district of the state will be given the system to update the geographical names in their district only. Then, the State Liaison Officer will collect the geographical names which have been update from the districts for the validation and send back to the working group within three (3) months after receiving the system.

4.2 Romanization System for Other Names

Some States in Malaysia have requested for the use of "Jawi" or Arabic signage for geographic names, apart from the Romanized Malay system. In this regard, some States especially in state of Terengganu, Malaysia has been using the said signage for quite some time. Pertaining to this matter, the concerned Working Group has agreed that the request to use "Jawi" will be considered after the development of basic elements in the structure of Web Gazetteer. This resulted in the development of the transliteration system for geographical names from Malay language to Jawi script and Jawi script to Malay language.

4.3 Pronunciation for Geographical Names in the Web Gazetteer

Some communities in the States have their own dialects thus, pronunciation of geographic names can be different and sometimes cannot be determined correctly. On this matter, MNCGN had decided that "Audio File" be developed for all names that appear in the web gazetteer and this would in certain ways be able to address this matter and would lead to pronunciation of geographical names being made in a standardized manner.

Decision was also made by MNCGN where two (2) versions of "Audio File" have to be developed to represent its different way of pronunciations. In this regard, first version represents pronunciation using standard language whilst the second version represents dialect pronunciation of each state of the country.

5.   CONCLUSION

It has been widely acknowledged that consistent use of accurate place names is an important element in effective communication worldwide, apart from supporting socio-economic development, conservation and national infrastructure. Standard geographical names can also identify and reflect culture, heritage and landscape. There is an imperative need to develop a comprehensive database containing names of official places that would benefit trade and commerce, population census and national statistics, property right and cadastre, urban and regional planning, environmental management, natural disaster relief, security strategy and peace-keeping operations, maps and atlas production, automatic navigation, tourism, and communication including postal and news services. MNCGN represent Malaysia's effort to meet such needs.