

10 March 2025

English

**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names****2025 session**

New York, 28 April – 2 May 2025

Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda *

**Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names****Geographical naming in Malaysia: highlights and progress**

Submitted by Malaysia

Summary **

The report provides information on geographical naming activities by Malaysia from 2023 to 2024. The activities were led by the Malaysian National Committee on Geographical Names. Significant progress has been made in updating the Geographic Names Database, which now includes a substantial number of verified names, with further refinements under way for selected urban areas.

Malaysia has developed its own MyGeoName portal, accessible to users, which stores the country's verified geographic names. The application is a web platform that provides a comprehensive list of places in Malaysia along with unique features such as location maps, state histories, spellings in Jawi and audio pronunciations.

Malaysia emphasizes inclusivity and cultural understanding by involving Indigenous and local communities in the naming process, ensuring that names respect cultural and historical contexts. Workshops and training sessions have enhanced stakeholders' understanding of naming standards, while updated guidelines and upcoming multilingual publications have supported both national and international consistency.

Malaysia has also actively participated in meetings of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and regional meetings, presenting updates and aligning national practices with international standards.

In line with United Nations resolutions, Malaysia has its own policies and frameworks that promote the accurate and consistent use of geographical names through the guidelines for the determination of geographical names in Malaysia. Those measures enhance communication, planning, and data integration while preserving cultural heritage. Collaborating efforts with state governments, local authorities and other stakeholders ensure that geographical naming supports sustainable development. The country's approach demonstrates its commitment to aligning national naming practices with international standards, delivering measurable benefits in economic, social, and developmental contexts.

* GEGN.2/2025/1.

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Geographical naming in Malaysia: highlights and progress

1. Introduction

This report highlights geographical naming activities in Malaysia from May 2023 to September 2024, along with plans extending to 2025. It covers projects, meetings, publications, and programs carried out by committees under Malaysia's National Committee on Geographical Names (JKNG).

Established on September 11, 2002, JKNG oversees geographical naming activities in Malaysia. Chaired by the Director General of Survey and Mapping Malaysia, the committee includes members from federal and state agencies. Its core responsibilities include formulating national naming guidelines, developing a geographical names database, promoting official place names, and contributing to international geographical naming initiatives. JKNG also establishes criteria for determining official geographical names to support national interests, ensures compliance with government requirements, and collaborates on national geospatial infrastructure initiatives.

To facilitate the implementation of geographical naming activities in line with these guidelines, various committees operate at both national and state levels (see Figure 1).

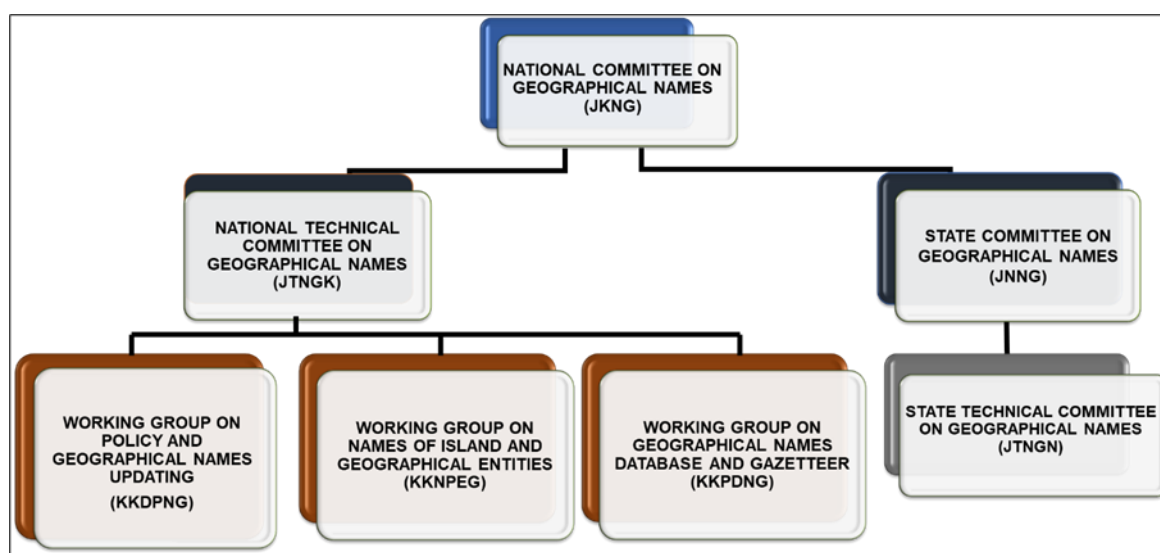


Figure 1 The organisational structure of JKNG

At the national level, the National Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGK) oversees three specialized working groups:

- Working Group on Policy and Geographical Names Updating (KKDPNG): Focuses on establishing principles, policies, and procedures for updating geographical names.
- Working Group on Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer (KKPDNG): Responsible for developing and maintaining the Geographical Names Database (PDNG).
- Working Group on Names of Islands and Geographical Entities (KKNPEG): Identifies proposed names for islands and marine entities in Malaysia.

At the state and federal territory levels, the State Committee on Geographical Names (JNNG) coordinates geographical naming activities. Chaired by the State Secretary or the Secretary General of the Ministry of Federal Territories, JNNG comprises representatives from local authorities. Each JNNG is supported by a State Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGN), which assists in implementing geographical naming activities within the respective state or federal territory.

2. Activities on National Standardisation of Geographical Names

Several initiatives and focus areas aim to strengthen the consistent and dynamic standardisation of geographical names in Malaysia. These efforts include:

- a) **National Committee and Working Group Meetings:** Regular meetings are held to discuss and coordinate geographical naming activities, involving the National Committee and its working groups.
- b) **Geographical Names Database (PDNG):** A centralized database, the Geographical Names Database (PDNG), has been established to provide accurate and up-to-date information on geographical names.
- c) **Workshops and Briefings:** These sessions enhance stakeholders' understanding of geographical naming principles, policies, and practices, offering valuable insights and guidance.
- d) **Geographical Names Update Portal:** A dedicated online portal has been developed to facilitate the timely and efficient updating of geographical names. This portal allows authorised users to submit and review name updates, ensuring accuracy and consistency in the naming process.
- e) **Publications:** Resources such as guidelines, reports, mock-up documents, and strategic frameworks are published to promote best practices and support standardisation in geographical naming.

These initiatives collectively enhance and harmonize geographical naming practices, aligning them with national standards.

3. National and international meetings, conferences, symposiums, publicity and publications

No	Activities	Details
1	National Committee and Working Groups Meeting	
a)	4th Meeting of KKDPNG	Date: 3rd April 2024 Location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia Gist: Proposal to expand the development of the Geographical Names Database (PDNG) Phase III to other states in Malaysia.
b)	16th Meeting of KKPDNG	Date: 21st May 2024 Location: Putrajaya, Malaysia Gist: Presentation on the progress of Strategic Framework Document of PDNG and National Gazetteer and Prototype Application of MyGeoName Version 2.0 to improve the PDNG updating workflow procedures.
c)	22nd Meeting of KKNPEG	Date: 27th June 2024 Location: Perlis, Malaysia Gist: Progress of the publication of the book - Book 3 - Names of Island and Geographical Entities including Undersea Features
d)	26th Meeting of JTNGK	Date: 31st July 2024 Location: Perlis, Malaysia Gist: Presentation of reports for the three working groups - KKDPNG, KKPDNG and KKNPEG.
e)	20th Meeting of JKNG	Date: 6th September 2024 Location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

No	Activities	Details
		Gist: Presentation of reports from JTNGK and state level.
2.	International Meetings	
a)	International Training on Toponymy Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage	Date: 19th – 23rd June 2023 Location: Bali, Indonesia Gist: Attended the workshop on toponymy and geographical names as cultural heritage.
b)	12th Divisional Meeting of the UNGEGN ASE Division	Date: 23rd June 2023 Location: Bali, Indonesia Gist: Reported on activities related to geographical naming in Malaysia from 2022 to 2023 and activities planned to be held until the end of 2024.
c)	1st Generic Terms of UNGEGN ASE Division	Date: 14th January 2025 Location: Online Platform Gist: Discussed the progress of the Generic Terms compilation among the ASE Division, led by Brunei Darussalam
d)	13th Divisional Meeting of the UNGEGN ASE Division	Date: 15th January 2025 Location: Online Platform Gist: Reported on activities related to geographical naming in Malaysia from 2023 to 2024 and activities planned to be held until the end of 2025
e)	2nd Generic Terms of UNGEGN ASE Division	Date: 20th February 2025 Location: Online Platform Gist: Continuation of the first discussion on generic terms among the ASE Division, led by Brunei Darussalam
3.	Geographical Name Database (PDNG)	
a)	Phase I	<u>Completed</u> Development of PDNG and MyGeoName application which was completed in 2019.
b)	Phase II	<u>Completed</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of PDNG at a scale of 1:50,000. As of September 2024, a total of 76,146 geographical names have been verified and updated in the PDNG and MyGeoName application.
c)	Phase III	<u>On-going</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of PDNG for urban areas at a scale of 1:5,000 and 1:10,000.

No	Activities	Details
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of September 2024, a total of 7,453 geographical names have been verified and updated in the PDNG and MyGeoName application.
4.	Workshops and Briefings	
a)	Workshop on Updating the Geographical Names Database for the Federal Territory of Putrajaya with PGN	Date: 15th December 2023 Location: Putrajaya, Malaysia
b)	Verification of Geographic Entities	Date: 16th February 2024 Location: Selangor, Malaysia
c)	Workshop on Review and Updating the Geographical Names Database for the State of Terengganu	Date: 1st – 4th July 2024 Location: Terengganu, Malaysia
5.	Publications	
a)	Publication of the Third Edition of the Guidelines for Determining Geographical Names Book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project under JKNG aims to coordinate geographical name determination activities in Malaysia Expected to publish in Mid 2025
b)	Publication of the English Edition of the Guidelines for Determining Geographical Names Book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The English Edition is published to meet the needs and use of foreigners Expected to publish in Mid 2025
c)	Strategic Framework Document for Geographical Names Database (PDNG) and National Gazette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This document serves as a reference and guide for the comprehensive implementation of PDNG, as well as for the development of the MyGeoname Application Enhancement
d)	Book 3 - List of Islands and Geographical Entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers the state of Sabah and the Federal Territory of Labuan To be published in 2025
e)	Book 4 - List of Islands and Geographical Entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers the state of Sarawak To be published in June 2025
f)	State Gazetteer Mock-up Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting in 2017 until 2024, 14 documents representing fourteen 14 states and federal territories have been published, with only two states remaining

4. Activities towards the implementation of the UNGEGN ASE Division Work Plan

As outlined in the UNGEGN ASE Division Work Plan for 2022 to 2026, there are four main focus areas: Regional Database and Gazetteer Standards, UNGEGN ASE Division Annual Meetings, the Regional Map of ASER Members, and Generic Terms for the Asia South-East Region. In alignment with this work plan, Malaysia has consistently produced State Gazetteer Mock-up Documents for all states since 2017. As of 2024, 14 documents have been completed, with only two states remaining.

In addition, Malaysia has actively participated in all meetings and activities organized by UNGEGN and the UNGEGN ASE Division. Specifically, Malaysia had representatives at the 3rd UNGEGN Meeting held in New York from May 1–5, 2023, as well as the 12th UNGEGN-ASE Meeting and International Training on Toponymy in Bali on June 23, 2024.

Furthermore, Malaysia has updated its Generic Terms as requested by the UNGEGN-ASE secretariat. This update was presented during the Generic Terms meeting on January 14, 2025. Additionally, there was a continuation of the discussion to further understand the generic terms used by each Southeast Asian country, held on February 20, 2025.

5. Measures taken and proposed to implement United Nations resolutions on the standardisation of geographical names, including the economic and social benefits

Malaysia recognizes the United Nations' goal of promoting the standardisation of geographical names at both national and international levels. By aligning national practices with international standards, Malaysia can strengthen its geographical naming framework and contribute meaningfully to global initiatives. In support of this objective, Malaysia remains actively committed to a range of initiatives aimed at implementing United Nations resolutions. These efforts include:

a) Align with UN Resolutions

Malaysia consistently aligns its policies with United Nations initiatives. For example, Malaysia has published the *Guidelines for the Determination of Geographical Names Malaysia*. This document addresses the selection, form, and use of geographical names in the country. The consistent use of accurate place names is crucial for effective global communication and supports socioeconomic development, conservation, and national infrastructure planning.

The United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNGEGN) held in Montreal in 1987 emphasized the need for each member country to develop toponymic guidelines. In line with this, Malaysia has established its own *Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors for International Use*. This publication represents Malaysia's effort to meet that requirement and was prepared by the National Committee on Geographical Names (JKNG).

b) Enhance Technological Infrastructure

Continue developing and updating the PDNG at detailed scales, including urban areas, with the information stored in a database and application accessible not only to JKNG members but also to the public.

c) Strengthen Collaboration and Communication

The working group and committee continuously involve stakeholders such as state governments, local authorities, and indigenous communities in the decision-making process. The determination of geographical names, as well as the compilation of lists of islands and geographical entities, always includes these stakeholders, as they are locals who possess better knowledge of the environment and historical names of the places.

d) Regular Meeting/Discussion

Annual meetings, held regularly at both federal and state levels and organized by technical committees, offer a forum for comprehensive discussions, decision-making, and joint problem-solving on geographical names and entities in Malaysia.

6. Activities on the naming of undersea features names under Sub-Committee on Undersea Features Names (SCUFN)

SCUFN's efforts contribute to global initiatives on geographical names, ensuring that undersea features are incorporated into broader naming systems managed by organizations like the UNGEGN. Thus, maintaining close liaison with the UNGEGN and international or national authorities concerned with naming undersea features is one of the SCUFN's objectives.

In Malaysia, the National Hydrographic Centre (NHC) plays a pivotal role in managing the naming of undersea features, operating under the KKNPEG framework and updating naming proposals for JTNGK. Malaysia has been an active participant in the SCUFN since 2013, during which time it submitted several naming proposals for features in the South China Sea (SCS). These proposals were graciously accepted and approved in 2016. With ongoing survey activities yielding the discovery of new undersea features, Malaysia has remained proactive in submitting naming proposals to SCUFN, successfully naming 17 features, all of which are now incorporated into the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) database.

The process of naming undersea features in the SCS presents challenges and complexities, often carrying political implications. Extended naming disputes can contribute to heightening tensions among the concerned nations. Consequently, in 2023, SCUFN made a prudent decision to temporarily freeze naming proposals in the SCS until a joint proposal can be formulated by all interested parties. In this context, Malaysia has taken a proactive step of hosting engagement meetings with these parties. However, following two rounds of meetings, it appears that reaching a consensus may require additional time.

UNGEKN is requested to consider the following matters:

- a) To provide guidance on the most effective strategies for Malaysia and SCUFN to navigate the complexities associated with undersea feature naming in the SCS.
- b) To facilitate constructive dialogue or propose frameworks that could assist in reaching a permanent solution for the naming of undersea features in the SCS.

7. Future / Planned Activities

I. Meeting

- a) 21st National Committee on Geographical Names of Malaysia (JKNG);
- b) 27th National Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGK);
- c) 5th Working Group on Policy and Geographical Names Updating (KKDPNG);
- d) 17th Working Group on National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer (KKPDNG);
- e) 23rd Working Group on Island Names and Geographical Entities (KKNPEG);
- f) State Committee on Geographical Names (JNNG);
- g) State Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGN); and
- h) 2025/Fourth Session of United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEKN)

II. Geographical Names Database (PDNG)

- a) Phase III - The database will be continuously and consistently updated until the selected areas are completed.
- b) Expansion of PDNG Phase III to five selected areas in Malaysia namely Bandar Yong Peng, Johor; Bandar Nibong Tebal, Pulau Pinang; Bandar Serian, Sarawak; Pekan Membakut, Sabah; and Bandar Beaufort, Sabah.

III. Publications

- a) Book: List of Islands and Geographical Entities (Sabah and Federal Territories of Labuan).
- b) 3rd Edition of Guidelines for the Determination of Geographical Names Malaysia and in English Version.
- c) Book: List of Islands and Geographical Entities (Sarawak).
- d) Strategic Framework Document for the PDNG and National Gazetteer.

8. Conclusion

In summary, the National Report of Malaysia for 2023-2024 underscores the country's essential progress and dedication to geographical naming initiatives. Through JKNG and its associated committees, Malaysia has reaffirmed its commitment to standardising geographical names and adopting best practices.

The report highlights ongoing efforts such as regular committee meetings, the establishment of the Geographical Names Database (PDNG), workshops, briefings, and the creation of an online portal for name updates. These initiatives aim to streamline and harmonize geographical naming practices, contributing to safety, sustainable development, economic growth, and the preservation of national sovereignty. Collaborations at federal and state levels foster meaningful discussions and resolution of challenges. Key publications, including the Guidelines for Determining Geographical Names, the Strategic Framework Document for the PDNG, and the List of Islands and Geographical Entities, further support the standardisation process, yielding economic and social advantages. Looking ahead, Malaysia plans to organize additional committee meetings, complete the PDNG for specific urban areas, expand coverage to five more states, and engage in international conferences. These steps will boost standardisation efforts and enhance the accuracy and global recognition of geographical names.

Apart from that, Malaysia supports the idea of SCUFN collaborating with global organisations like UNGEGN to standardise undersea feature names. Due to the challenges in naming the South China Sea (SCS), SCUFN temporarily suspended proposals in 2023 until all interested parties reach a joint agreement. Therefore, UNGEGN is requested to provide guidance on navigating these challenges and propose frameworks for a lasting solution.

Ultimately, Malaysia's steadfast focus on geographical naming reflects its dedication to promoting accuracy, consistency, and efficiency, which translate into tangible economic, social, and developmental benefits for the nation.