

**2008**

# A Malaysian Report



Prepared by

MALAYSIAN BOOK PUBLISHERS  
ASSOCIATION (MABOPA)

**ASEAN Book Publishers Association**  
**Annual General Meeting**  
Singapore, 30-31 May 2008

**A Report on the Malaysian  
Book Publishing Industry**

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# **A Report on the Malaysian Book Publishing Industry and the Role of MABOPA**

## **Introduction**

Malaysian publishers have been very active over the past year. Many members of the Malaysian Book Publishers Association (MABOPA) participated in regional book fairs as well as major international book fairs. Apart from that, MABOPA also organised several dialogue sessions with other related organisations to discuss various issues affecting the book industry. Many MABOPA members also attended local as well as international workshops and seminars. The membership of MABOPA has grown to 159, an increase of 30% over a 24-month period. This indicates that the industry is becoming increasingly vibrant as more players are entering the industry. To cater to a much larger membership and to improve service delivery and information sharing, MABOPA has turned to electronic means of communication by using emails and the official website extensively.

## **The Current Publishing Environment in Malaysia**

Currently, Malaysian publishers enjoy a conducive publishing environment. The Ninth Malaysian Plan (9MP) drawn up by the government for the period from 2006 to 2010 has many policies that are favourable to the book industry. The macro strategy of the 9MP emphasizes the development of the knowledge-economy and human capital. The Education Development Master Plan (EDMP) drawn up by the Ministry of Education also for the same period has very focused objectives on the development of human capital as well. The book industry has a pivotal role in these master plans as books are necessary to gain knowledge, and obviously, knowledge is the bridge to the goals of the 9MP and the EDMP. Under the 9MP, up to almost 20% of the total budget has been allocated to education and training-related sectors. More rural libraries are being set up and bigger grants are being allocated to the National Library and the rural libraries to purchase books.

Another indicator for the industry is the increased reading habit, testified by the two million visitors recorded over ten days at the recently concluded 2008 Kuala Lumpur International Book Fair. Furthermore, more publishers are entering the trade, more titles are published per publisher per year and more mega bookshops are opening up in the country. The Malaysian book industry is estimated to be worth about RM1.5 billion a year.

## Some Important Facts

### The Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) 2006-2010

- Malaysian GDP is set to expand on an average of 6.0% per annum (2007: 6.3%), achieving a per capita GNP of RM23,573 in 2010
- The population is projected to increase to 28.96 million in 2010
- The government will pump in a total of RM220 billion in the 9MP compared to RM170 billion in 8MP
- RM45.1 billion, or 20.5%, will be allocated for the implementation of various education and training programmes
- RM23.19 billion or 10.5% will be allocated for Education, RM17.6 billion or 8.0% will be channelled into Higher Education.

### Statistics of Books Registered under the Library Depository Act, 1986

LEVEL	1997	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Textbooks	1,553	1,941	1,183	3,863	5,493	2,325
Children	2,383	3,420	1,003	2,470	3,929	5,040
Adult	1,621	2,268	2,539	3,977	5,141	3,658
Total	5,557	7,629	4,725	10,310	14,563	11,623
MABOPA Membership	82	98	119	118	128	Apr. 2008 159

## New Trends and Challenges

Due to the conducive business environment, more publishers have emerged or become more active. As the world is rapidly becoming borderless with the advancement of electronic technology, more foreign publishers are also entering the local industry. Stiffer competition as a result of a crowded market place is one of the more challenging issues faced by the growing industry. The Internet's negative impact on reading and electronic publishing are two other challenges being faced by conventional print-media publishers. On the other hand, syllabus-based publishers are experiencing a downtrend, with the recent 100% free text-book-on-loan scheme

policy for all school children. This policy has effectively caused the open market for school textbooks to vanish as textbooks are being recycled. In addition, these approved textbooks used in all schools have just been revised recently, thus causing a significant drop in the use of supplementary books and workbooks.

## **Future Prospects**

Despite the challenges, future prospects for the book industry remain bright. As mentioned earlier, the general public's improved reading habit has caused the sales of general books, fiction and non-fiction for both adults and children, to increase steadily and significantly. Print runs for such general books have shown marked improvements, with the best-selling titles achieving print-runs of tens of thousands. The increasing population, higher GNP per capita, higher literacy rate and greater reading awareness have all contributed positively to the growth of the industry. The government's emphasis on human capital development, better infrastructure and better governance have also provided a lot of impetus to drive the knowledge-economy forward. Buoyed by the economy, local publishers are beginning to venture into the regional and international markets.

## **The Way Forward**

The government should continue to play a leading role to further advance the industry. Increased government spending would boost the economy of a developing country. Hence, it is imperative that the Malaysian Government continues to implement the policies already laid out in the 9MP and the EDMP. A cause of great concern among the industry players is the delivery of the policies in terms of speed and consistency. The post 9MP policies would be of greater importance if continued growth in the industry is to be maintained. Budget allocation under the future Malaysia Plan must also take into account population growth and be increased accordingly. In line with the aims of the 9MP, all government ministries and agencies should put in place programmes that will inculcate the reading habit among the staff and have specific budgets to purchase books. The Malaysian international trade missions should include publishers and incentives should be given for publishers to promote the Malaysian IP at the trade fairs.

Publishers should put in place a publishing programme that emphasizes both quality and quantity. Product development should be more export oriented so that the contents could be easily customised to suit the intended markets. The ability to think out of the box to achieve product and marketing innovation would be the determining success factor, while the ability to penetrate the regional and international markets and the ability to keep costs down would determine profitability.

## **Role of the ABPA in Regional Co-operation**

To facilitate regional trade, ABPA should publish an ABPA Members' Export-ready Titles Catalogue and ABPA Members' Directory. To facilitate free flow of information, ABPA bulletins should be published quarterly. ABPA can also assist members of ABPA countries in identifying local partners and suitable titles for co-publishing. Further assistance in identifying local agents for marketing and distribution would also help to expedite matters and improve the chances of success. To achieve these objectives, the ABPA framework should be legalised to ensure the smooth operation of ABPA. Other useful services that ABPA can provide are translation services, advisory services on local bureaucracy, content localisation and development as well as courses and seminars for ABPA member countries. The current harmonious cooperation among ABPA members could be further enhanced with the establishment of better infrastructure. Strategies should also be established to promote ABPA as the voice of ASEAN's book industry at the ABPA, IPA and other international forums.

## **Role of MABOPA**

Activities for the Period of 15<sup>th</sup> April 2007 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008

### **Ministry of Education**

Good rapport and communication prevailed throughout the year between MABOPA and various divisions of the Ministry of Education (MoE). In particular, MABOPA had worked hand-in-hand with the Textbooks Division (BBT) in ensuring that the 100% Textbooks Loan Scheme (SPBT) was carried out successfully even though the announcement was made very late in the year during the 2008 National Budget Speech in September 2007. MABOPA's views were also sought by the MoE on a few other issues in relation to the book industry.

### **Luncheon Meeting with the Director General of the Malaysian National Library**

A luncheon was held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008 to welcome the new Director General of the Malaysian National Library (PNM). Members who attended the luncheon meeting had the opportunity to hear from the DG himself on the policy of PNM in relation to book purchasing.

### **Dialogue with the Council Members of the Malaysian Booksellers Association**

A dialogue between the Executive Committee members of MABOPA and the council members of the Malaysian Booksellers Association (MBA) was held on 28<sup>th</sup>

September 2007 at Shah's Village Hotel, Petaling Jaya. The 100% SPBT scheme and several other issues affecting the book industry were discussed at the meeting.

The meeting ended with a proposal for the two associations to prepare separate memorandums on issues affecting their respective trades. Both the associations agreed that the memorandums should be presented jointly to the MoE when ready.

### **Dialogue with MABOPA Members**

In response to the latest development and the change in government policies which affect the book industry, a dialogue session was organised on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007 for members to share ideas and opinions in facing the challenges. The dialogue session was well attended with active participation from members of the floor during the Q&A session.

### **Workshops on the National Occupational Skill Standards (NOSS) for Publishing**

The Department of Skills Development, Ministry of Human Resources had called upon the publishing industry experts in Malaysia to develop the National Occupational Skill Standards (NOSS) for the publishing industry. This document, when ready, would be used by all training providers as the basis for developing and delivering training programmes that will meet the workplace competency requirements expected by the publishing industry. The document would also be used as a benchmark for assessing the achievement of training objectives as well as awarding skill qualifications.

The Panel of Experts comprised publishing personnel from the industry and university presses in the country. Mr Law King Hui and Puan Zainora Muhamad represented MABOPA as well as the industry in these workshops.

### **FOMCA Workshop**

The President of MABOPA presented a paper entitled "Copyright's Role in a Nation's Economy: A Publisher's Perspective" at the Copyright and Access to Knowledge Workshop organised by the Federation of Malaysia Consumer Association (FOMCA) on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008. The workshop was very well attended and a wide range of copyright issues were covered by the speakers among whom were Professor Dr. Ida Madieha bt. Abdul Ghani Azmi of the International Islamic University Malaysia, Professor Dr Lim Heng Gee of the Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pn Siti Zakiah Aman, Vice President II of the Librarians' Association of Malaysia, and

Ass. Prof. Syed Salim Agha Syed Azmatullah of the International Islamic University Malaysia.

### **2008 Malaysian Budget Consultation Dialogue**

The President attended the 2008 Budget Consultation Dialogue on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2007 chaired by YAB Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, our Prime Minister who is also the Finance Minister.

### **Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Dialogue**

The President and the Deputy President attended the 2007 MITI Annual Dialogue on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2007 chaired by the Minister of MITI. MABOPA raised the issue on Anti-Dumping Duty imposed on woodfree paper imported from non-ASEAN countries and Anti-Dumping Duty imposed on all imported newsprint paper. The ministry may review these policies when they are due for renewal in the later part of 2008.

### **IFRRO Seminar**

MABOPA, in collaboration with the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisation (IFRRO), had organised a seminar on “Copyright and Collective Management” in conjunction with the Kuala Lumpur International Book Fair 2007. The seminar was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2007 at PWTC.

Seminar participants were given an overview of copyright issues being faced worldwide, the need for a country to set up a Reproduction Rights Organisation (RRO), the role of an RRO in protecting authors’ and publishers’ copyrights and case studies of a country’s RROs already in operation. The seminar was facilitated by Mr Michael Fraser, the Vice-President of IFRRO and person-in-charge of RROs in the Asia-Pacific region. Mr Fraser, a former Chairman of the Australian National Book Council, has since left IFRRO to set up his own consulting firm.

### **Google Book Search Seminar**

MABOPA and Google Inc. conducted seminars on a new marketing tool for book publishers, Google Book Search, during the 2007 and the 2008 Kuala Lumpur International Book Fair. Google Inc. representatives, Mr Mark Nelson and Mr Erik Hartman, were present to provide information and product demonstrations.

As a result of the seminars, several MABOPA members signed up for the programme and made their books available for the Google Book Search. This new technology provides members with new tools and techniques to reach new markets via Internet marketing.

## **International Affairs**

MABOPA took part in the following book fairs in 2007 with the cooperation of the ASEAN Book Publishers Association (ABPA). A free booth was provided for MABOPA to display members' publications at each of these book fairs. There was a marked increase in participation and awareness among our members at the international book fairs. MABOPA will continue to encourage members to "swim to the blue ocean".

The book fairs that MABOPA participated in under the ABPA umbrella are:

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Kuala Lumpur International Book Fair | 4th – 13th Apr. 2008     |
| 2. Bangkok International Book Fair      | 25th – 31st Mar. 2008    |
| 3. Brunei Book Fair                     | 25th Feb – 6th Mar. 2008 |
| 4. Taipei International Book Fair       | 13th – 18th Feb. 2008    |
| 5. Jakarta International Book Fair      | 14th – 18th Nov. 2007    |
| 6. Manila Book Fair                     | 28th Aug – 2nd Sep. 2007 |
| 7. Hong Kong Book Fair                  | 17th – 24th Jul. 2007    |
| 8. Seoul International Book Fair        | 1st – 6th Jun. 2007      |
| 9. World Book Fair Singapore            | 25th May – 3rd Jun. 2007 |

The other international fairs that many members also attended are:

1. London Book Fair
2. Bologna Book Fair
3. Seoul International Book Fair
4. Tokyo International Book Fair
5. Beijing International Book Fair
6. Frankfurt Book Fair

## **ASEAN Book Publishers Association (ABPA)**

The President attended the 2nd ABPA Annual General Meeting in Manila from 28<sup>th</sup> August to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2007 and presented a paper on the prospect and outlook of the Malaysian publishing industry. At the AGM, the ABPA Presidency was handed over to Atty. Dominador Burhain of the Philippines by the out-going president, Mr Thanachai Santichakul of Thailand. Among those who also attended the AGM were Arief Hakim of PTS Publications, James Goh of Junior Pages Publications, Raymond Yeo of Kualiti Books, and Pn Siti Mazlin of MBKM.

## **Asia Pacific Publishers Association ( APPA )**

MABOPA has been admitted into the APPA in 2007. The President attended the 2008 AGM held in Seoul, South Korea from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2008.

## **International Publishers Association (IPA)**

MABOPA will apply to be re-admitted into the International Publishers Association (IPA). The President had had discussions on the matter with the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the IPA in Seoul. The application will be submitted soon.

## **mabopa.com.my Website**

MABOPA website was upgraded to provide new features which make the website more informative and dynamic. The website is still undergoing further improvements and would be more useful to members when the latest information obtained for the MABOPA Directory is updated to the member database. We are in the process of creating a "Book Gallery" to enable members to showcase their best works/publications to reach out not only to the domestic market but also to the world!

## **mabopaonline@mabopa.com.my Mailing List**

mabopaonline currently has more than 130 members – among whom are “senior” members who are usually computer illiterate – receiving and sharing information online for quicker and more convenient delivery which costs nothing.

## **MABOPA Directory 2008/2009**

The Executive Committee during the year made a concerted effort to publish a comprehensive directory for members. The effort, initiated in the middle of last year, to collect data from members was not without its challenges. With a lot of perseverance, the MABOPA Directory is finally compiled and published. It is hoped that the Directory will become a useful reference to government agencies. It is also hoped that the Directory will be invaluable to local and international trade, and would go a long way in assisting members in their businesses.

## **Rules & Constitution Review**

The President headed a sub-committee to review the association's Rules & Constitution. The Draft of the revised Rules and Constitution was circulated to members at the 2008 AGM for comments.

## **Media Relations**

MABOPA is fully aware that good media relations are essential to promote the book industry in Malaysia. In relation to this, MABOPA has maintained a cordial relationship with the media industry. Positive statements and comments are made to the press whenever deemed necessary. MABOPA also has plans to work closely with the media to come out with feature articles to create a positive image for the book industry.

## **Membership**

MABOPA membership, as of April 2008, stands at 159 members. To strengthen the association, the Executive Committee will work harder to attract more publishers to become MABOPA members.

## **Other Involvements in the Book Industry**

### **Malaysian Book Industry Council (MBIC)**

MABOPA is represented in the Malaysian Book Industry Council (MBIC) by the President, the Deputy President, the Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer. MABOPA President was the chairman of the council for the term 2006-2007. The President of Malaysian Book Importers and Exporters Association, Mr Ivan Hoe, is the Chairman of MBIC for the term 2008-2009.

### **2008 KLIBF**

The 2008 Kuala Lumpur Book Fair (KLIBF) was successfully staged by MBKM with the cooperation of the MBIC. Mr Law King Hui was reappointed as the chairman of the 2008 KLIBF Organising Committee. Other MABOPA representatives in the organising committee are Pn Zainora Muhamad, Mr Arief Hakim, Mr Ishak Hamzah and Mr Peter Paul. The MABOPA representatives also held the chairmanships of the Programme Book and Directory Sub-committee, Activities Sub-committee, Promotions and Publicity Sub-committee and Fair Ground and Balloting Sub-committee respectively.

The KLIBF has seen steady growth in both trade participation and visitors over the recent years. For instance, the 2006 KLIBF recorded 700,000 visitors while the 2007 KLIBF saw an impressive increase of 70% to 1.2 million visitors. Apart from another 70% increase this year to 2 million visitors, the 2008 fair was also the largest in Malaysian history, with slightly more than 700 booths sold.

### **International Conference on Book Industry (ICoBI)**

For the first time, and in conjunction with the 2008 KLIBF, an International Conference on Book Industry (ICoBI) was jointly organised by MBKM and Malaysian Scholarly Publications Council (MAPIM) with support from MBIC. About 450 participants from the local and international book fraternity attended the 2-day conference. The keynote speaker was Mr. George J. Farina from the United States of America. Forum panelists included industry experts from the United Kingdom, India, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia. Five ABPA member countries, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines, presented their country reports at the conference. Unfortunately, Thailand and Vietnam were unable to attend the KLIBF and the ICoBI.

### **Business & Rights Centre at KLIBF**

MABOPA took part in the running of the Business & Rights Centre at the 2007 and 2008 KLIBF. Mr Raymond Yeo, Mr James Goh, Mr Raymond Liu and Mr Y. Sahadevan took part in promoting and manning the centre, entertaining the visitors and handling enquiries from foreign delegations. In the long run, MABOPA hopes that the Rights Centre will progress into a full blown rights marketplace.

The Business & Rights Centre will be featured again at the 2009 KLIBF. MABOPA hopes to work closely with ABPA to make the Business Centre a big success this time.

### **Malaysian National Book Award**

MABOPA is involved in the main committee and sub-committees in organising the Malaysian National Book Award.

### **Social Functions**

During the year, MABOPA participated in many functions organised jointly with MBKM and MBIC members. Among the functions organised were a farewell dinner

on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2007 for En. Baharom Ibrahim, the first Director of MBKM, a gathering in memory of the late Tan Sri Abdul Rafie Mahat, the previous MBKM Chairman on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2007, and a farewell high-tea reception for YBhg. Dato' Ahamad Sipon, the previous Director General of Education on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2007.