COUNTRY REPORT MALAYSIA FOR 9TH DIVISIONAL MEETING OF UNGEGN ASIA SOUTH EAST

24 NOVEMBER 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

This report from Malaysia covers the period from October 2020 until October 2021 since the last virtual meeting on 27 October 2020. The report includes all the 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 (JKNG), established on 11th September 2002 by the Malaysian Cabinet, is responsible in coordinating of the 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 JKNG as follows:

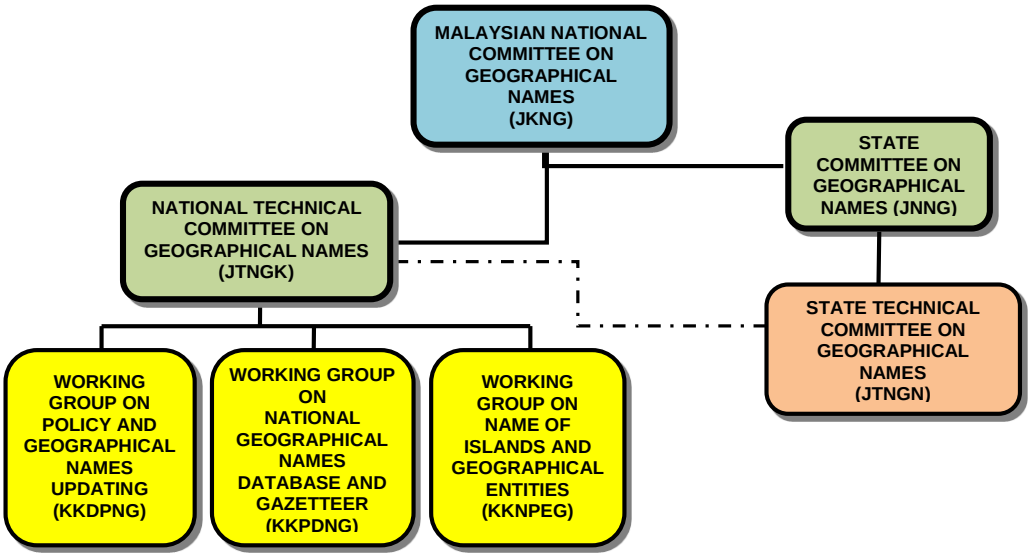
i. National Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGK);
ii. Working Group on Policy and Geographical Names Updating (KKDPNG);
iii. Working Group on National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer (KKPDNG); and
iv. Working Group on Name of Islands and Geographical Entities (KKNPEG).

At the State level, the State Committee on Geographical Names (JNNG) was established to coordinate and implement the guidelines and procedures formulated by JKNG. This committee is chaired by the State Secretary or the Secretary General of Ministry of Federal Territories (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 (JTNGN) was also established to assist the JNNG.

The responsibilities of JKNG 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 JKNG is as shown below:



Terms of reference for JKNG 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 (TCG2) DSM and other committees connected with the formation of the national geographical information infrastructure.

3. ACTIVITIES

There are nine (9) activities that have been done during the period from October 2020 to October 2021. Below are the related activities on geographical naming that were conducted during the period under review.

3.1 2nd Session United Nation Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) Meeting

2nd Session UNGEGN Meeting which convened from 3 to 8 May 2021 on virtual platform was attended by seven (7) delegates from Malaysia led by Deputy Director General of Survey and Mapping Malaysia I. Division report for Asia South East region, UNGEGN-ASE, has been presented by Mr Mohamad Arief Syafii, President of UNGEGN-ASE from Indonesia.

3.2 Malaysia National Committee on Geographical Names (JKNG) Meeting

The JKNG holds its meeting at least once a year. The 16th and 17th Meeting of JKNG were held virtually from Kuala Lumpur on 3 November 2020 and 14 September 2021 respectively.

3.3 National Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGK) Meeting

National Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGK) held its 23rd Meeting on 17 June 2021 virtually from Kuala Lumpur. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Director General of Survey and Mapping Malaysia I. During this meeting, the Working Groups and States Technical Committee presented their activities.

3.4 Working Group on Policy and Geographical Names Updating (KKDPNG)

The Working Group on Policy and Geographical Names Updating (KKDPNG) has been administered by JUPEM and its functions to assists in the deriving of principle, policy and procedure of geographic names updating and governance.

There are three (3) meetings were held to address issues on policy and updating matters including the matter on naming the unnamed islands, updating the Geographical Names Database (PDNG), enhancing in-shore and off-shore geographical entity naming procedure, publishing the Book of Island and Geographical Entity Names (NPEG), etc.

3.5 Working Group on National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer (KKPDNG)

The Working Group on National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer (KKPDNG) has been established in 11 Mac 2003 and lead by the National Geospatial Center (PGN). One of the products that have been developed is the PDNG. The development of PDNG is based on data obtained from the JUPEM and the National Hydrographic Centre (PHN) and subsequently, the geographical name will be verified by the state Economic Planning Unit (UPEN) before being uploaded into the PDNG

PDNG is using MyGeoName application to display the geographical names, locations, histories and state magazines. The application also provides the geographic names in Jawi and audio that contains pronunciation in official Malay and local dialects has been developed and consists of amongst others local names, location, historical background, Arabic character, audio file and gazette notification that have authoritative records available for government and public use.

KKPDNG is in the process of developing the new feature of Visualization Video Module to enhance the existing information in the database. Videos of place of interest (POI) have been uploaded to the MyGeoName application and KKPDNG targets to upload a video of POI in every district in Selangor followed by other states in Malaysia by end of year 2022.

The geographic names database benefits are:

i. To ensure effective communication through consistent use of a proper name of places.

ii. To support socio-economic development, conservation and national infrastructure;
iii. To facilitate in locating various communities by establishing consistent use of geographical names
iv. To preserve the rich heritage of places, whereby each name tells a story and provides a sense of place; and
v. To identify and reflect culture, heritage and landscape associated with geographic names.

The verification of geographical names database using digital topographical maps at the scale of 1:25 000 for all states in Malaysia including Sabah and Sarawak which consists of 66,454 geographical names has been completed.

Malaysia is continuing with the verification of the geographical names using the digital topographical maps at scales of 1:5 000 for eight (8) selected cities in Malaysia. At this moment, there are 1,626 geographical names have been verified and updated in the PDNG. KKPDNG targets to complete the verification and updating work by the end of year 2022.

As for the activity of preparing State Gazetteer Document, KKPDNG has completed the publication of documents for ten (10) states in Malaysia. The rest of six (6) states' documents are still in progress and KKPDNG targets to complete on 2023.

3.6 Working Group on Name of Islands and Geographical Entities (KKNPEG)

The Working Group on Name of Islands and Geographical Entities (KKNPEG) was established on 20 June 2006 and is chaired by the National Hydrographic Centre (PHN).

The tasks of this Working Group are as follows:

i. Carry out surveys and researches as well as identifying and proposing the naming of unnamed islands and off-shore geographical entities. 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 geographical entities including from charts, gazettes, maps, agreements and related documents;
iii. Document and update the list of islands and geographical entities; and
iv. Propose new names for existing islands and off-shore geographical entities related to the characteristic of geographical entities in accordance with the guideline for the Standardization of Undersea Feature Names produced by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO).

KKNPEG has identified 904 islands and 794 geographical entities to be named. Until September 2021, naming process of the 904 islands and 623 entities was done, whilst the remaining 171 entities is in progress.

Other than that, KKNPEG has also identified twenty (20) undersea features since year 2016. KKNPEG has forwarded names of the twenty (20) undersea features to Sub Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) for approval. Seven (7) features have been approved and gazetted leaving the remaining thirteen (13) features with pending status due to overlapping claim issues by other countries which are to be resolved through mutual consultations with the related countries.

KKNPEG has also republished new format for the Book of Islands and Geographical Entities Name (NPEG). Book 1 NPEG covering seven (7) states of Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Malacca has been published on 20 December 2019. Book 2 NPEG covering four (4) states of Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan has been published on 13 October 2021. Book 3 NPEG covering Federal Territory of Labuan and state of Sabah and Book 4 NPEG covering Sarawak are still in progress and tentatively to be published on December 2022 and December 2023 respectively.

3.7 Workshop and Briefing

The objective of workshop and briefing in JKNG is to disseminate information on the Guidelines and to discuss the progress of validating the Geographical Names Database. They were also intended to help participants understand the importance of coordinated geographical naming and to populate the Geographical Names Database. These efforts were expected to support the implementation of the Malaysian Geospatial Data Infrastructure (MyGDI) initiative which is undertaken by the National Geospatial Centre (PGN). During period from October 2020 until October 2021, the list of workshop and briefing that have been conducted are:-

i. Final Verification of Book 2 of Island and Geographical Entity Names (NPEG) on 11 November 2020;
ii. Online briefing on Updating Geographical Name Database (PDNG) Phase III (Town Map) for Kuantan on 27 April 2021;
iii. Webinar "Recognizing Generic Terms in Geographical Names from Local Languages" organized by UNGEGN-ASE on 30 August 2021; and

iv. Discussion on Naming Procedure of Island and Unnamed Off-Shore Geographical Entities Exceeding Three (3) Nautical Miles From Shoreline on 14 October 2021.

3.8 Regional Map - ASED Collaborative Platform Website

On August 2021, link, username and password of the ASED Collaborative Platform Website have been received from UNGEGN-ASE secretariat. Multiple sessions of discussion on data layers to be uploaded and data uploading testing have been carried out by Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia. On 19 November 2021, two (2) data layers of 'Main Roads' and 'State Capital' of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak were successfully uploaded as a start. Other data layers will gradually uploaded from time to time.

4. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

In developing and implementing the geographical naming standards throughout the country, there were some issues encountered by JKNG, amongst which are as follows:

4.1 Verification of The Geographical Names

The targeted duration for each state to update geographical names database is 30% per year. Hence, the cycle will take three (3) years for each state to complete updating their geographical names database. As the effects of the long process cycle, the geographical names in the database might not literally up to date.

4.2 Duplication in Updating Geographical Names

The Geographic Information System (GIS) has over the past decades advanced so much, from a concept of digitally creating maps and systems into an array of applications. In Malaysia, there are many applications that have developed by multiple agencies such as MyGeoName, MyGeoServe, GeoJohor, Integrated Landuse Planning System, PeGIS, GIS9 and so on. The developments causing difficulty to standardize and updating the geographical names due to all the fore mentioned applications are not centralized.

4.3 Lack of Management Spatial and Non-Spatial Data

At the moment, a total of 53,099 audio clips of official pronunciation, 57,753 audio clips of local dialect pronunciation, 57,205 images of Jawi writing and 35 video visuals were stored separately. Therefore, it is required to complete the task for updating both spatial and non-spatial data before migrate the data in the geographical names database.

5. CONCLUSION

Geographic names provide authoritative information relating to the location and spelling of geographical names which are gazetted in a consistent format for the official use of government, industry and the public. A 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 essential 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. JKNG plays the role in representing Malaysia to meet such needs locally and in the global scale.