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## INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE MAHSEER 2006



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*Delegates to the International Symposium on Mahseer, 29-30 March 2006, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

*FAO provided support to the symposium through the participation of MB Reantaso who presented a paper co-authored by DM Bartley, MB Reantaso, MR Hasan, RP Subasinghe and S Funge-Smith on 'Status of Mahseer Fishery Resources: Options for Development and Conservation', and travel support to a number of delegates from the Himalayan region to participate in the symposium. The Malaysian Fisheries Society (MFS) extends its kind appreciation to FAO for the the support and assistance extended.*

## MAHSEER 2006 DECLARATION

The delegates (125 from 10 Asia-Pacific nations) of "Mahseer 2006", a 2-day symposium organized by the Malaysian Fisheries Society in collaboration with the

- ⇒ Department of Fisheries Malaysia, (DOF)
- ⇒ Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Malaysia (Perhilitan)
- ⇒ Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (LKIM)
- ⇒ Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)
- ⇒ INFOFISH
- ⇒ Aquaculture Asia Pacific Magazine
- ⇒ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and
- ⇒ Network of Aquaculture Centers in the Asia-Pacific (NACA),

unanimously recognize that:

1. The Mahseer is a cultural icon of diverse economic, recreational and conservational value in rivers of eleven Asian nations, with many species transcending country/national boundaries.
2. The Mahseer is an integral component of the aquatic ecosystem and an important indicator of its health and supports the livelihood of many rural, indigenous ethnic groups in Asia.
3. The strategies that need to be developed to maintain the sustainability of Mahseer populations are dependant on the effective utilization of available information on this important and iconic group of fishes.
4. There is an urgent need to collate the available information and synthesize them through appropriate mechanisms to facilitate policy developments.

The group is unanimous in its suggestion that the FAO, in conjunction with regional and national organizations, as well as other concerned organizations take the initiative to launch the above activities in the immediate future. The delegates recognize the urgent need to improve the information on the status and trends of this important group of fishes through;

1. Diligent reporting of catch and production information by fishers, mostly comprising of rural, indigenous ethnic groups, anglers, fish farmers and researchers to relevant national resource agencies.
2. The information should be reported to regional and international centres, such as NACA and FAO as well as to the FishBase of the World Fish Centre and relevant national governmental and non-governmental organisations such as the Malaysian Fisheries Society.
3. Contribution of information relevant towards the conservation, taxonomy, biology, breeding and culture of the relevant Mahseer species.
4. The relevant agencies will facilitate and provide guidance for sustained utilization of fish stocks and improve their conservation status.

The specific immediate activities that would facilitate attainment of the objectives as recognized by the group are;

a) Initiation of a suitable network, preferably linked to an existing regional network, such as that of the Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia-Pacific (NACA) for facilitating information exchange and dissemination on Mahseer biology, culture and conservation in the Asian region.

b) Initiation and coordination of a R&D program, and associated capacity building in participating Asian countries, developed through regional and international organizations such as NACA and the FAO, in consultation and conjunction with national authorities, to address key critical issues as identified at this symposium. These include

- ⇒ taxonomy and phylogeny of the group
- ⇒ population structure and conservation status of important species
- ⇒ best practice approaches to the culture of suitable Mahseer species
- ⇒ development of sound stock enhancement practices, amongst others.

c) The establishment of a Reference Center for the Mahseer to support R&D activities and information gathering and transfer/extension/education/capacity building on aspects of the Mahseer to achieve the sustainable exploitation, conservation and aquaculture.

d) Preparation of relevant literature, including a practical handbook on the taxonomy, conservation, biology, breeding and culture of the relevant Mahseer species.

It is believed that the establishment of a suitable platform for R & D on Mahseer will also have a flow through effect on other important indigenous species groups of economic, cultural and conservational value.