

# Majuikan and Malaysian Challenges for the 80s

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The Malaysian Fisheries Development Authority or Majuikan was established in November 1971 with the dual objective of uplifting the socioeconomic status of the fishermen and promoting and developing the fisheries and ancillary industries. Since its inception, Majuikan has grown considerably in size and structure to accommodate the rapid expansion and modernization occurring in the fisheries sector, as manifested in numerous and varied projects such as in commercial fishing, marketing, and aquaculture, as well as cage and cockle cultures. In addition, Majuikan is playing the caretaker's role to the Fishermen's Association and Cooperatives which are primarily for the distribution of inputs and marketing of catches. These projects are supported by a sizeable allocation which increased from a mere M\$17.5 million during the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-75) to some M\$224 million during the Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-85).

## Commercial Fishing Enterprises

Over the last decade or so, Majuikan was heavily oriented towards commercialized and relatively capital-intensive enterprises, its main role being promoter and catalyst especially in the exploitation of offshore resources. Consequently, much of Majuikan's development efforts focused on large-scale trawling and purse seining. Today, Majuikan's commercial fishing fleet comprises 183 boats distributed over major fishing centers throughout the country.

Initially, the commercial fishing project was carried out as a co-enterprise between Majuikan and selected fishermen on a profit-sharing basis. Majuikan had hoped to transfer ownership of the boats to the fishermen through hire-purchase later on. To date, more than 100 units of the fleet have been handed over to individual fishermen. In a recent policy review, Majuikan was directed to stop building fishing vessels and expedite the transfer of boat ownership to deserving participant-fishermen so that Majuikan can concen-

trate on supportive projects such as providing shore-based facilities like cold rooms, ice-makers, workshops and slipways.

## Marketing

Majuikan's involvement in marketing has been confined to mere regulatory and facilitating functions such as licensing, standardization of weights and grades, and market intelligence and research. The private sector intermediaries have continued to play a vital role in the marketing system. Of late, however, Majuikan became directly and actively involved in marketing and trading.

The shift in policy on marketing was prompted by the general contention that the system of marketing intermediaries through the 'middlemen' is exploitative in nature and that the fishermen do not benefit from the increasing prices of fish. Hence, the Fishermen's Association Marketing Project was initiated in 1979 through which Majuikan created competitive marketing conditions to ensure fair prices for fishermen while maintaining reasonable and stable prices for consumers. Majuikan has, so far, set up 15 purchasing centers, 6 wholesale and 46 retail outlets in major fishing centers, towns and cities throughout Peninsular Malaysia.

## Aquaculture

Depleting resources, the energy crisis and resultant high costs of fishing and labor problems have brought about a new interest in aquaculture as an alternative to capture fisheries. Under the Fourth Malaysia Plan, about 40% of Majuikan's total allocation is committed to aquaculture development. The main objective is to provide gainful additional employment to inshore fishermen who are mostly living within or at the threshold of absolute poverty. Emphasis is given to coastal aquaculture as it is felt that this will not cause too much displacement on the present lifestyles of the fisherfolks. The ultimate goal is to resettle inshore fishermen into aquafarms for cage and cockle cultures.

Majuikan's pioneer brackishwater culture project was recently launched in Sungai Merbok in Kedah for a total



Majuikan's *Macrobrachium* farm at Puchong.

investment of some M\$6 million. About 72 ha have been developed while another 2,400 ha await development. The first aquafarming resettlement project is expected to be operational late 1982. Meanwhile, suitable sites in coastal areas, mangrove swamps, mudflats and inland water bodies are being surveyed for development into aquafarms. Preliminary estimates are that some 100,000 hectares in Peninsular Malaysia could be utilized for brackishwater culture.

## Conclusions

From a history of near neglect, aquaculture was brought into the mainstream of fisheries development in Malaysia about three years ago. The current emphasis on aquaculture by Majuikan is welcome, since culture fisheries in the long run have greater production and employment potentials than capture fisheries. Majuikan's past performance and experience with capture fishing enterprises have not been very encouraging (see the author's "Capture fisheries in Peninsular Malaysia," *Marine Policy*, October 1981, pages 322-330).

At the risk of over-generalization, two factors contributed to this important emphasis on aquaculture: firstly, Majuikan's past large-scale fishing enterprises proved to be commercially non-viable, high-cost investments benefitting only a handful of fishermen; and, secondly, capture fisheries began showing signs of overfishing. It may well be that, under present circumstances, policy measures aimed at integrating small-scale fishing with aquaculture or even agriculture will ultimately prove more effective in uplifting the socioeconomic status of fishing communities in this country.

Majuikan trawler.

