

PERSATUAN MEMANCING MALAYSIA IS TEN YEARS OLD!

Time flies. The Penang Angling Association (PMPP) is ten years old. I still remember reading the first draft of the constitution and organizing the first fishing competition in Penang.

PMPP was born at the right time. It was born at a time when angling as a hobby or sport was beginning to attract the interests of the Malaysian public. Now, ten years later, angling is a billion-dollar industry in Malaysia alone. Every month, fishing competitions are held somewhere in the country. Malaysians from all walks of life, of all races, young and old mingle in festive mood. A premier competition attracts as many as 3,000 participants and a 30,000 crowd with cars given out as prizes. Fishing magazines and locally produced TV documentary have become popular. Angling associations and clubs mushroomed. New business, like fresh and saltwater commercial fishing ponds emerged even in cities, unfortunately not without its side effects that should be regulated. Angling seminars and workshops, something "crazy" ten years ago, were held. In short, during the lifetime of PMPP, angling has become a huge industry as well as a popular sport and hobby. I have no doubt that PMPP had played a part in it.

But, angling, whether as a sport or a hobby, will exist only so long as there are fish. Anglers are aware of that. Hence, they talk, practise and promote "catch and release", something hardly heard of in this country a decade ago. They talk about introducing rules aimed at conserving the endangered species, about licencing of boats for hire for the purpose of angling and so on. But, like the tenggiri that gets entangled with the apollo lure by the tail, the anglers get caught: they are licensed (or is it still going to be?).

Unfortunately, the people who should know about fishing do not know angling. Hence the misconception that anglers are depleting the fish population and are competitors to the coastal fishermen and therefore must be licensed. The real culprits, the trawlers, escape attention. Excuses for lack of enforcement is standard year after year. And the depletion goes on.

But that does not mean that PMPP and other angling associations should give up out of frustration. After all, anglers are supposed to be the most patient people. Members of PMPP and others must strive on in their conservation efforts while enjoying their occasional fishing trips so long as the fish are still there.

Enjoy fishing. Conserve fish. And take care of the environment.

Thank you.

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