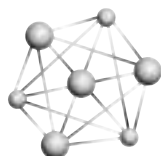


PUBLIC AWARENESS OF
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
IN MALAYSIA
2002

September 2003



MASTIC

MALAYSIAN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION CENTRE
Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment, Malaysia

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The Public Awareness of Science and Technology in Malaysia 2002 study was the fifth in a series of biennial report conducted by Malaysian Science and Technology Information Centre (MASTIC). The last four studies were conducted in 1994, 1996, 1998 and 2000.

The studies were conducted to determine the Malaysian public awareness, attitude, interest and understanding towards Science and Technology (S&T) as well as to ascertain the extent of the public's involvement in government-supported S&T programmes and the success in implementation of such programmes.

Comparisons were also made with other countries for policy making and benchmarking. The findings are useful particularly for policy makers to plan and employ better strategies to make S&T less formidable and more appealing to Malaysians. The public in turn will benefit from effective S&T programmes which bring positive impact on both social and economic developments. While Malaysians may have the right attitude towards S&T, there is still room for improvement in the level of interest, knowledge and direct involvement in and support of S&T activities. The findings of the latest study allow us to take a closer look on how we could employ S&T to the best advantage and more importantly, to strengthen our position in the international arena and bring our country on par with developed nations.

We at MASTIC will continue to be at the forefront of providing S&T information and being an important link between policy makers, researchers, research fund providers and users of research results. This report on the Malaysian Public Awareness of Science and Technology in Malaysia 2002 is certainly important at a time that our country is placing greater emphasis on S&T to propel us in meeting the challenges of the future.

The Public Awareness of Science and Technology in Malaysia 2002 study, formalised in January 2002, could not have been completed without the assistance and support of various agencies and individuals. MASTIC would like to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to:

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ABSTRACT

Title of Study	: Public Awareness of Science and Technology in Malaysia
Aim of Study	: To determine public awareness, attitude, interest and understanding towards Science and Technology (S&T)
Frequency of Study	: Biennial
Number of Studies Conducted	: Five
Year Studies Were Conducted	: 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002
Study Commissioned by	: Malaysian Science and Technology Information Centre (MASTIC), Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment (MOSTE)
Latest Study	: Public Awareness of Science and Technology in Malaysia 2002 (Fifth Study)

Abstract of the Study Conducted in 2002

Targeted Sample Size	: 10,000 respondents
Actual Sample Size	: 9,760 respondents selected using the multistage stratified random sampling technique
Collation of Data	: Data was collated using face-to-face interview technique and structured questionnaires similar to those in year 2000 were used

Summary of Findings 2002

For year 2002, there was only a slight increase in the perceived knowledge of the public on general and S&T issues compared to previous years. The level was still between moderately and slightly knowledgeable. The level of interest in S&T had hardly changed over the years while the level of interest in general issues particularly economics and business had declined. Malaysians were found to be supportive of the impact of S&T on everyday living but the number of those who supported S&T had significantly reduced by more than 10% of the respondents.

On specific S&T issues, the study found that the public believed that S&T research is important for economic growth, and that it has a positive impact and is important for social development. Genetic engineering and cloning, though known to a majority of the respondents, were not really supported by them. Less than half of the respondents could quote all the Malaysian flagships of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). The declining interest in S&T was perhaps more due to lack of information rather than lack of qualification required and the academic approach used in the teaching of S&T.

The level of overall understanding of S&T terms and concepts among Malaysians, indicated by the percentage of correct responses by the respondents, had declined to less than 50%. This is in contrast to the understanding of environmental terms and concepts that appeared to have improved significantly. The subjective level of understanding of environmental terms and concepts has been consistently higher than the objective understanding.

Television and newspapers continued to be the two most popular sources of both general and science information. Radio was mainly for entertainment. Science magazines and the Internet were the least used as sources of information. Sports and entertainment were the most favoured items of the newspaper. The Internet was fast becoming popular among Malaysians but Internet users were limited to selected groups only.

The more popular places of S&T interests were the zoos and the museums. Less than 20% visited the other places of S&T interests. The main reason given was the remoteness of these places from most of the respondents' homes. Less than 20% of the respondents were aware of the eighteen government supported S&T programmes. Of these, only four were well known to them and these were basically school-related programmes.

When comparisons were made at the international level, the overall knowledge of S&T terms and concepts of Malaysians was found to be lower than that of USA, Europe and Japan. The study level of S&T knowledge among Americans was found to increase progressively over the years while the opposite was true for Malaysians.

Malaysians tended to have about the same level of knowledge and interest in S&T whereas the interest level among the Americans, Europeans and the Japanese was found to be significantly higher than the level of knowledge. Television was the most popular source of information followed by newspapers. The selection pattern of most watched programme is the same between Europe and Malaysia, with Malaysia having more viewers than Europe.

This study tended to show that the levels of attitude, interest, knowledge and understanding of S&T and the environment are affected by the respondents' level of education, background in science education, occupation, household income, age, sources of information, locality and the remoteness of places of S&T interests. Thus to enhance public awareness and understanding of S&T, the study proposed specific actions to be taken encompassing four major areas namely: effective dissemination of S&T information, introduction of benefits to those involved in S&T, provision of appropriate S&T infrastructure and facilities and creation of better S&T programmes.