



M'sians becoming nation of hybrid readers

➤ Printed material remains preferred media for leisure reading while digital options mainly used for study and convenience

BY **KIRTINEE RAMESH**
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia is becoming a nation of “hybrid readers” who switch between print and digital formats, said Malaysian Librarians Association president Dr Ghazali Mohamed Fadzil.

He said Malaysians still preferred printed books for deep and leisure reading, while digital options are mainly used for convenience and academic work.

Ghazali added that reading habits are now more flexible, with readers moving between both formats depending on their needs.

Citing the association’s “Reading Profile of Malaysians 2022/2023”, he said 6.9% of Malaysians visited public libraries more than once a week, while more than half made occasional visits annually.

Malaysians read an average of 24 books a year.

He added that despite the rise of e-books and social media, traditional reading habits remained strong, including among younger generations.

“For faster access to information, especially for work or study, the younger generation goes digital.”

Ghazali said the hybrid reading

culture is also reflected in major book events, including the Kuala Lumpur International Book Fair which recorded 1.8 million visitors in 2025, with young people forming a significant share.

He stressed that printed books remained highly relevant in today’s digital-first environment, with Malaysia’s publishing industry continuing to show strong resilience. “Print book publishing in Malaysia still remains very strong.”

However, he noted that building a strong reading culture remained a challenge rooted in early upbringing and the home environment.

“When parents do not read and the home environment does not support reading, it affects habits later on.”

He also said reading in Malaysia was still largely exam-oriented.

While schools and libraries played an important role in promoting literacy, Ghazali said the foundation of reading should begin at home.

“The problem of reading starts at home and the solution is also at home.”

He added that libraries were encouraging “home libraries” through initiatives such as bulk borrowing and home library



Ghazali said modern libraries offer a wide range of services, including AI tools, digital repositories, makerspaces, gaming areas and interactive learning programmes. — **AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN**

competitions, while still remaining important as community spaces for study, discussion and lifelong learning.

“A reading family usually builds a home library and continues reading, but still returns to libraries for broader knowledge and engagement,” he said, adding that libraries are also a “third place” for many.

Ghazali said libraries are keeping pace with technology and are often early adopters of innovations, including AI tools.

“Libraries are not just about books; they manage knowledge,” he said, noting that they are continuously evolving to bring knowledge to users.

He said modern libraries offer a wide range of services, including AI tools, digital repositories, makerspaces, gaming areas and interactive learning programmes.

“Libraries are knowledge spaces where knowledge is created, shared and reused,” he said, citing the Raja Tun Uda Library, Kuala Lumpur Public Library and Universiti Malaya Library as examples of transformation.

He added that Malaysia’s national reading agenda, *Program Galakan Membaca* (reading encouragement programme), included literacy classes, storytelling sessions, reading competitions, book talks and home library initiatives.

In 2024, the National Library recorded more than 8.2 million user visits and over 56,000 reading and literacy programmes nationwide.

One key initiative is *Jom Membaca 10 Minit*, held every April 23 in conjunction with World Book and Copyright Day, encouraging Malaysians to read for at least 10 minutes a day.

Since its launch in 2014, the campaign reached more than 13 million participants in 2025 alone, with a cumulative total of 64.8 million.

“The objective is to build a reading culture and encourage lifelong learning,” Ghazali said.

Even short daily reading could improve well-being and reduce stress.

Ghazali said reading was not just a habit but a foundation for national development.

“Reading opens new doors of ideas and possibilities. It is a quiet architecture of the mind,” he said, adding that a progressive society was ultimately a “nation of readers.”

He noted that while reading initiatives existed, stronger support was still needed, particularly in improving libraries and digital infrastructure.

Ghazali called for increased funding, better manpower, improved internet access in rural libraries and stronger integration between community internet centres and public libraries.

“Libraries have always been relevant in creating value and developing communities,” he said.