

# 'Give us the guidelines to new content'

Local publishers: We can meet CEFR standards for English textbooks too

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**PETALING JAYA:** Local English textbook publishers are confident they can meet the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) standards if given the chance.

Malaysian Book Publishers Association (Mapoba) honorary secretary Sheikh Faisal Sheikh Mansor welcomed the Government's efforts to improve students' command of English, but said local publishers should have been given an opportunity to produce the content.

"If we were told to meet the new CEFR standards, we could have done it. But give us the guidelines.

"We can produce high quality content at cheaper prices," he said.

Sheikh Faisal was commenting on *The Star's* exclusive front page report yesterday that imported English textbooks would be used for Year One and Two as well as Form One and Two starting next year.

He added that it was better to use local books as students could relate to local content better.

"Big Ben, for example, will be very foreign to some of our students.

"Textbooks do more than just teach a language. They're also meant to inculcate good values and teach students about culture," he said.

Sheikh Faisal said the ministry's move would greatly affect the local publishing

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industry, which would see their earnings reduced.

Sasbadi Holdings Bhd group managing director Law King Hui said local publishers were "more than capable" of producing quality material that could meet any standard – including CEFR – if local talents knew the specifications, curriculum scope, and were given sufficient time to develop the manuscript.

A spokesman from Percetakan Rina Sdn Bhd said the company expected to have its profits slashed by RM1mil because of the move.

The company publishes English textbooks for Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools for less than RM10 a book.

"With the ministry set to implement CEFR next year, will the students be able to cope with the higher level of English?" she asked. National Union of the Teaching Profession

## SCHOOL CALENDAR FOR 2018

For schools in Perlis, Penang, Perak, Negri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor, Pahang, Sabah, Sarawak, Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya

TERM	SCHOOL DAYS AND HOLIDAYS	START	END	DAYS
1	SCHOOL DAYS	02.01.18	16.03.18	54
	MID-TERM BREAK	17.03.18	25.03.18	9
	SCHOOL DAYS	26.03.18	08.06.18	55
	MID-YEAR BREAK	09.06.18	24.06.18	16
2	SCHOOL DAYS	25.06.18	17.08.18	40
	MID-TERM BREAK	18.08.18	26.08.18	9
	SCHOOL DAYS	27.08.18	23.11.18	65
	YEAR-END BREAK	24.11.18	31.12.18	38

\*Schools in Johor, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu begin a day earlier for all dates.  
Source: Education Ministry ([www.moe.gov.my](http://www.moe.gov.my))

(NUTP) Penang branch chairman Ng Weng Tutt said trainee teachers and teachers must be "upgraded" with in-depth training.

"Upskilling teacher trainers is important. We need continuous development programmes so that we're well-equipped to teach future teachers," said Ng, who is also a lecturer at the Teacher Education Institute (IPG) Penang campus.

Lau Hut Yee, who has written nearly 200 school textbooks and revision books, said imported textbooks would not be suitable for local students.

"Our teachers want exercises on grammar and comprehension as students here learn English mainly through these exercises.

"Imported books aren't written that way," said Lau, who was trained as a teacher at the Malayan Teachers' Training College Kirkby in Britain.

NUTP secretary-general Harry Tan described the ministry's move as a game changer.

"Now local writers will have to step up and compete with those from the United Kingdom."