

# DIPLOMATIC VOICE

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## IDFR Bids Farewell to its Director General



On 9 November 2016, IDFR organised a farewell high-tea for Datuk Salman Ahmad, its tenth Director General whose contract was ending. Held at the Multi Purpose Hall, the event was attended by all the staff.

Puan Hajah Norani Ibrahim, Director of Special Projects, who will be the Acting Director General, gave the Welcoming Remarks and then invited Datuk Salman on stage to give his farewell speech.

In his speech, Datuk Salman encouraged the officers, especially the junior ones, to start writing reports, case studies and research papers. His usual teasing aside, Datuk Salman reminded the staff to always give their best to IDFR and thanked them for all their hard work, cooperation and commitment.

After his speech, Datuk Salman was joined by Puan Hajah Norani and other Heads of Centres on stage. He was presented with some books, a framed collection of his photos taken during his tenure at IDFR, as well as a basket of flowers and a cake. This was followed by a video presentation of the staff bidding farewell to Datuk Salman, and a *sajak* recital by Mr. Ahmad Kamal from the Centre for Languages and Cultural Diplomacy.

Whilst everyone was enjoying the spread, Datuk Salman went to each table to chat with the staff, and many took the opportunity to capture the moment with group selfies.

Before the high tea ended, the staff took the customary group

photo on the stage. The staff then congregated at the Main Lobby for Datuk Salman's clocking out ceremony.

To Datuk Salman, we wish him all the best and dedicate this poem to him:

*You empowered us with the  
power of knowledge  
You motivated us with the  
best tutelage  
You helped us move ahead  
with unending motivation  
As a leader and a human  
being, you are a true  
inspiration*

## Professor Dato' Dr. Zakaria Ahmad

Senior Vice-President/Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research),  
HELP University and IDFR's Distinguished Fellow



1. We thank you for agreeing to be reappointed as IDFR's Distinguished Fellow for the next five years. Apart from what was discussed at the first Distinguished Fellow meeting held recently, can you suggest how IDFR can further gain from the combined expertise of all our Fellows?

**Answer**

The Fellows provide a layer of expertise and experience to IDFR's Director General and the staff, and play a role in enhancing the prestige of IDFR. It is a "sounding board", but curtailment of resources and shortage of funds mean the role of the Fellows is limited. The Fellows should be more engaged in IDFR's activities and programmes.

2. You are one of the pioneers of the collaboration between IDFR and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for the Master's Programme in Social Science (Strategy and Diplomacy) which started in

1999. How has the programme maintained its relevance to the contemporary needs in diplomacy and international relations?

**Answer**

The IDFR-UKM Master's Programme in Social Science (Strategy and Diplomacy) was started in 1999 so that such a programme, comparable to say, the M.A. Programme at the Fletcher School of Diplomacy (in the US), could be offered in Malaysia and offer a "Southeast Asian/ASEAN" flavour and content for postgraduate students of international relations. Such a programme is still valuable not only for higher education in a selected field of study but also in enhancing Malaysia's stature in regional and international diplomacy. The programme's theme of the nexus between "strategy" and "diplomacy" is as relevant now as it was in the past, although there must be constant revision of the curriculum's content and in the

quality of the product.

It has also been forgotten that the programme was designed to be a "foreign policy" tool, and this needs to be re-emphasized in line with Malaysia's enhanced role in international affairs.

3. You are also one of the instructors for the Master's Programme. What would your advice be to IDFR to further improve and enrich the programme?

**Answer**

I help to teach in the Master's Programme but other duties and commitments restrict my full contribution. I believe my role as a senior scholar enriches the education of the students. Over the years, the programme has endured vicissitudes in terms of its delivery and output. The programme can benefit if greater coordination and cooperation exist and are sustained between UKM and IDFR's senior management. At times, in the past,



both UKM and IDFR have not fully understood the value of the programme and the quantum of support needed for its success.

I urge greater coordination between UKM and IDFR in terms of more joint meetings and constant monitoring. IDFR needs to give sustained support in terms of facilities and resources, and UKM must be vigilant in ensuring a high quality of teaching. IDFR's Director General and the authorities of UKM should engage more in monitoring the programme.

4. The Master's Programme used to include a short study visit overseas. How important do you think is the study visit for the students, and should it be continued at some point in the future?

**Answer**

The study visit to an overseas destination was an integral component when the programme began. It has been discontinued but I believe it should be re-introduced. Such a visit is invaluable in allowing a first-hand look at what is being done and happening in an overseas destination. The students' span of knowledge is enhanced and broadened to understand phenomena beyond the classroom.

5. IDFR recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As a seasoned academician, can you suggest ways for IDFR to further improve its role for the next 25 years?

**Answer**

IDFR was established because specialized training was needed beyond the "general civil service" courses offered at INTAN. The model was the US Foreign Service Institute. However, IDFR has now become a department within the



Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is advocated that IDFR be given a degree of autonomy so that it may not be subjected to "bureaucratic control" and as such perform its tasks as a diplomatic training centre and conduct studies of foreign policy. I believe IDFR should be a leading diplomatic training academy in Southeast Asia and the world. Its "autonomy" status, led by a Director General who is not part of the Foreign Ministry establishment, can lead IDFR to greater heights. It must strive for excellence in its teaching role.

6. Throughout your career, you have probably encountered some challenges. Can you share with us the biggest challenge you have had to overcome and how has that affected or shaped your career today?

**Answer**

The challenges I face essentially relate to my role as a teacher, scholar and educator. I am fortunate to have started my career as an Administrative and Diplomatic Officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but my calling to be a university teacher meant a career path that has been fulfilling and rewarding. However, I sometimes wonder if I would have enjoyed life

better as a diplomat engulfed in the challenges of international events. As a young officer in the Ministry, I can still remember Tun Ghazali Shafie (when he was then the Secretary General) saying "those who can, do; those who can't, teach"! But I believe, as a teacher I did what I could. Was the switch from the Ministry to be a university don, then, a defining moment and therefore a life choice and a challenge? I have no regrets, and, more importantly, my role as a teacher was more as one who was accomplished in a vocation, and therefore contributed as much as the "man of action".

In this regard, therefore, my role as an IDFR Fellow allows me to contribute to enhancing our capacity as a premier centre for diplomatic training and learning.

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Concurrently, Professor Dato' Dr. Zakaria Ahmad is also the Distinguished Fellow of the Malaysian Armed Forces Defence College, the Institute of Public Security of Malaysia, and the Malaysian Institute of Defence and Security. He also serves as a Board member of the Malaysia-America Foundation. Professor Zakaria received his Bachelor of Social Science (Hons) from the University of Singapore in 1970; his MA from McMaster University in 1971; and his PhD in Political Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1977. He has published extensively on the politics and international affairs of Malaysia, ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific.

# ASEAN Community as a Catalyst for a Peaceful Region<sup>1</sup>

By Sufian Jusoh

ASEAN is the acronym for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was formed on 8 August 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. ASEAN has since expanded to cover most of Southeast Asia including Brunei, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> ASEAN is a large market, with 625 million people, 60 per cent of them are youth with a gross domestic product of USD 2.398 trillion. ASEAN is situated between two major economies, China and India, which are collaborators and competitors to ASEAN. ASEAN is situated within the old and new international trade routes, namely, the old Maritime Silk Road, which covers trade between the Middle East, China, Korea and Japan.

ASEAN as an international grouping of nations have developed from a mere loose organisation under the Bangkok Declaration into a more structured organisation through various initiatives including the Bali Accords I, II and III and the ASEAN Charter. The Bangkok Declaration states the general aim of the ASEAN Member States, inter alia, to accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development in the region and to promote regional peace and stability.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the ASEAN Charter provides ASEAN a legal personality and makes it an international government organisation. This makes ASEAN as a rules-based and people-oriented international organisation.

To promote peace and stability in the region, ASEAN Member States signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), otherwise known as Bali Concord I in 1976. Under Bali Concord I, ASEAN

Member States agreed that each will not use force but seek peaceful solutions in resolving conflicts. To date, 29 countries have signed the TAC, guided by important principles such as mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations; the right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion, or coercion; non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner; renunciation of threat or use of force; and effective cooperation among themselves.

## Conflicts in the ASEAN Region

The Southeast Asian region has a history of wars, state-to-state conflicts and disputes, and internal conflicts and disputes. The Pacific War during the World War II was intensely fought between the Allied Powers led by the British against the Japanese Imperial Army in all ASEAN Member States apart from Thailand. The main conflict that worries most ASEAN Member States and the world at large is the conflicting claims in the South China Sea. This is based on China's aggressiveness in claiming its rights over certain parts of South China Sea which sees multiple claims by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, China and Taiwan. These multiple claims have led to confrontation which is military in nature, including military-led land reclamation in some of the rocks in the Spratly Islands by China.

## The Role of ASEAN Community in Averting Conflicts in Southeast Asia

The ASEAN Community should play

an important role in averting and avoiding an escalation of the South China Sea conflicts into disputes. ASEAN can rely on legal instruments and diplomacy to avert conflicts and disputes. One such legal instrument is the TAC 1976 which was discussed above. ASEAN has also entered into Treaties of Amity and Cooperation with its dialogue partners such as Australia, Canada, India, Korea and Japan.

The ASEAN Political Security Community could offer a route for the ASEAN Member States to play a bigger role in resolving conflicts and disputes in the Southeast Asian Region. The ASEAN Political Security Community Blueprint outlines the main principles to be embraced by the member states. Such principles include political and security cooperation, live at peace with one another and the world at large, and more importantly, interstate conflict prevention and post conflict peace building. ASEAN has also provided structure for the implementation of the ASEAN Political Security Integration in 2015.

## Resolving the South China Sea Conflicts

The South China Sea is a prized sea zone for any country which can have total control of the area. It is one of the busiest and most important sea lanes in the world. It connects the Pacific with ASEAN and the Indian Ocean. In the modern world of aviation, airspace of South China Sea connects the various parts of the world. Most importantly, South China Sea is mineral rich with oil and gas, and this is proven by the fact that there are many oil production rigs, and oil and gas explorations for Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam. The water surrounding



Spratly Islands is believed to contain rich deposit of oil and gas which can supply manufacturing and power demands of a big growing economy such as China, or for exports and to generate income for countries controlling them.

Owning a piece of the pie in the South China Sea would also extend the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of a state, thus extending the opportunities for economic manipulation of the sea area, beyond extractive activities, including fishing and other related activities. Thus, it is not a surprise that South China Sea and the islands in the area have become a source of conflicting territorial demands by the littoral states.

Resolving South China Sea conflicts between the respective ASEAN Member States and China can be very tricky. Some ASEAN Member States adopt diplomacy approach due to economic and diplomatic reasons. Another group of ASEAN Member States take a more aggressive approach in defending their territories. This approach is understandable due to the nature of conflicts and incidences facing these countries because of their proximity to China.

In 2002, ASEAN Leaders agreed to the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. The Declaration states, among others:

“In the spirit of cooperation and understanding, to build trust and confidence between and among them, including holding dialogues and exchange of views as appropriate between their defense and military officials; ensuring just and humane treatment of all persons who are either in danger or in distress; notifying, on a voluntary basis, other Parties concerned of any impending joint/combined military exercise; and exchanging, on a voluntary basis,

relevant information.”

As we can see, the issue has been a sticking point between ASEAN and China, and 14 years have passed since the issuance of the Declaration. ASEAN Leaders in the Nay Pyi Taw Declaration on the ASEAN Community 2015 touched South China Sea by way of an overall address of the future of ASEAN and failed to issue specific communications exclusively addressing the conflict per se. ASEAN Leaders once again raise “Serious concerns over the ongoing developments in the South China Sea, which have increased tensions in the area.” ASEAN Leaders call for all acts to be “...in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to exercise self-restraint and avoid actions which could undermine peace and stability in the area; and to resolve disputes by peaceful means without resorting to threat or use of force.” ASEAN Leaders reiterated the importance of maintaining peace and stability, maritime security, freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea, and reiterates the importance of ASEAN’s Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea.

Under ASEAN’s Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea, ASEAN Member States reaffirm their commitments to: 1. the full implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (2002); 2. the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (2011); 3. the early conclusion of a Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea; 4. the full respect of the universally recognized principles of International Law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); 5. the

continued exercise of self-restraint and non-use of force by all parties; and 6. the peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with universally recognized principles of International Law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Despite the Declaration and the Six-Point Principles, the conflicts continue to linger where China takes a more aggressive approach in its territorial claim including conducting land reclamation in one of the rocks in Spratly Islands.

Upon Malaysia’s Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2015, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Retreat in January 2015 in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah produced a more serious communiqué on South China Sea. The statement says, among others, “sharing the concern raised by some Foreign Ministers on land reclamation in the South China Sea.” This specifically refers to the concern raised by the Philippines’ Foreign Secretary with the support of Vietnam. Hence, “The Ministers instructed our Senior Officials to intensify efforts towards achieving the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), and work vigorously towards the early conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC).”

In a diplomatic language, Malaysia tried to take leadership on the issue, by taking more serious initiatives and intensifying efforts towards the implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and to achieve the conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. The statement contains some form of work plan rather than just a mere “indication of concerns” as contained in the Nay Pyi Taw Declaration.

*Continued on page 14*

## Strengthening Cross-Cultural Communication and Negotiation Competence: Big Time Challenges

By A. Ramachandran

Understanding culture is no longer an option for international managers. Cross-cultural communication competence is a prerequisite for successful international managers and negotiators. Negotiation incorporates cultural dimensions that must be anticipated, recognised, understood, respected and managed by the involved parties. Cross-cultural negotiation processes are a culmination of perception, idea maps, social and cultural expectations and preferences, etc. Negotiators have to cope with new and often inconsistent information, reinforced by supportive (and not-so-supportive) non-verbal cues or signals (*Dr. David Berlo*).

Negotiations must be viewed from a cross-cultural context. I would like to refer to culture as the lenses through which we see and try to understand people and behaviour of people from other cultures. **Change your lenses and you can change your viewpoints.** This is easier said than done. One is so used to viewing things from one's own lenses that changing lenses is often extremely difficult. This results in stereotypes, fixed viewpoints, silo thinking, rigidity of thought, etc. Examples are all around us.

Negotiators must be competent communicators, able to understand that communication is more than sending and receiving signals or messages; it involves sharing of meanings and appropriate supportive actions. Both verbal and non-verbal communications are important, with non-verbal communication reinforcing verbal communication. Put these in a cross-cultural negotiating context and one sees the complexity of this discipline.

Let us take a brief tour of some countries and try to get a better understanding of the interplay of culture, communication and negotiation. Case illustrations from my experience living and working abroad, my research, supported by inputs from scientific research shed much needed light on this complex subject. I taught this subject at MBA level for British universities. My seminar participants come from over 45 countries. Let us share the learning experiences and, together, benefit.

Communication is how one influences the other party (or parties) to do (or not to do) what one wants (or does not want) the other party to do (or not to do). Basically, it is modelled around Aristotle's view of communication. Sounds simple but applied communication is not.

In verbal communication, the concept of "encoding" and "decoding" are matched to ensure sharing of meaning and understanding. The Japanese "*hai*" does not always mean "yes, I agree". The familiar "*two minutes, Sir!*" echoed throughout the Indian sub-continent, takes much, much longer! "*Chotto matte kudasai*" ("a moment, please") means just that in Japan. Likewise, "*bisa diatur*" (Indonesia), "*just two minutes by foot, Sir*" (Pakistan), "*meeting will start very soon*" (Fiji), "*chairman on the way*" (many developing countries), etc., must be interpreted within respective cultural contexts.

Let us move on to the non-verbal dimension of cross-cultural communication. The Indian headshake from left to right (effected rather gracefully) does not mean "no" or disagreement as in many

cultures. Maintaining direct eye contact (communicating with the eyes or "*oculemics*") is great for effective communication in Western nations but often frowned upon in many Asian countries. Prolonged eye contact is seen as being rude in Japan. Staring is perfectly alright in many Asian cultures but viewed as rude in the West. In Japan, one is expected to listen actively ("auditory dimension"), digest the message, think through the possible implications of the response, and only then respond. In some cultures, responses are given even before the speaker completely conveys his/her message (this communication barrier is termed as "closure"). The Chinese like the colour red. Red represents good fortune, wealth and prosperity; black is avoided. Do not present clocks to the Chinese as this is interpreted as life ticking away. Do not ask their age. In Indo China, do not tap anyone on the head, as that is the life centre. And so the list of don'ts goes on and on. Really challenging!

Communication is not common. As Charles Conradsaid, "communication is a process of managing meanings..." One communicates all the time, verbally and non-verbally, yet there are many instances when one misses one another's meanings. Intended meanings are not necessarily received, leading to miscommunication. The result is a sense of having been derailed, tricked, misled, misinformed, hoodwinked, etc. – all these are not good for establishing a win-win outcome and developing trusting relationships between negotiating parties.

Cross-cultural negotiation poses



great challenges. Asian negotiators generally favour communication and negotiating styles that are deeply rooted in Asian cultural preferences, such as mutual respect, care with words so as not to offend, less direct communication, saving face, and more emotion-based arguments to push through propositions. Such communicating and negotiating styles reflect what Professor T. Hall termed as “*high context societies*” with prescribed communication preferences. Negotiators negotiate contracts and relationships.

Having lived in Japan for over two years, and having numerous Japanese multinationals as clients, I gradually transformed my thought processes to better understand the Japanese way of communicating and negotiating. Yes, gradually. One cannot master Japanese-style communication and negotiation in a short time. Let me illustrate.

“*Wa*” is of utmost importance in communicating and negotiating in Japan. “*Wa*” reflects harmony in relationships of the negotiating parties. More than contracts, Japanese negotiate relationships. Sounds strange? In Western negotiation, contracts are negotiated; in Japanese negotiation, relationships form the core of all negotiations. Establishing cordial negotiating setting can be seen in the time taken for “talking shop”, enquiring personal preferences, talking briefly on common themes like the weather and food before delving into the issues being negotiated. Japanese prefer politeness, round-about (as opposed to direct) communication, saving face (“*kao wo tateru*”), listening first, reflecting and then expressing a response. The phases of a negotiation are orchestrated much like the scenes of a play, painstakingly conceptualized, scripted and acted out to perfection. I reiterate: one needs a 360 degree shift in thinking orientation! This is a

major challenge for the international manager.

Professor T. Hall also characterized the communication style of “*low context societies*” as being reflected by directness, logic, emphasis on issues rather than relationships, informality, task orientation, digital thinking, etc. American negotiation is characteristically direct, fact-based, rational-logical, and business oriented and efficiently managed (especially with regard to timelines and schedules). These characteristics are in stark contrast to those of “*high context societies*”. Thus, shifts in thinking orientations, listening and speaking preferences when negotiating are required of international negotiators.

Canada is a great country with wonderful scenery, friendly people and a melting pot of cultures. Truly a place to experience cultural diversity. Canada poses many interesting challenges for international managers and negotiators. Communication is direct, people are addressed by first names, titles often ignored and discussions are very crisp and to the point. Differences of viewpoints remain professional and do not enter the realm of personal domain.

Asians generally feel less comfortable calling seniors by their first names; they prefer the use of surnames or titles (like Doctor, Professor, etc.); they expect to be respected for their age and the high positions that they hold in their home countries; they do not like much debate of their ideas and suggestions. Geert Hofstede terms such divergence among nations as the “*power distance dimension*”, a notion reflecting the relative concern for status and position, ranking, and the attendant implications for respect, limited flow and control of communication, seating position, size of room (Yes! This is even

specified in many developing countries), decision making, etc. Many Asian nations, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, score high on “power distance”. Scandinavian countries score markedly lower on “power distance”.

Do take heed though. Do not overgeneralise or stereotype. A major Asian auto manufacturer scrapped a deal with an Indian auto maker as the Indian top brass were “too American” in their thinking and actions. This is a clear reflection of rigid thinking not backed by facts. Many senior Indian officials studied and worked in the US prior to returning to take up senior management positions in top corporations in India. One must expect them to reflect the thinking orientations they acquired and nurtured over the years abroad. Using terms coined by Geert Hofstede, the “hardware” is Indian and the “software” is Western. Great combination, I must say!

Why do you need to know all these? Such knowledge will facilitate smooth negotiation across cultures. One must take cognizance of such cultural characteristics and their impact on communication and negotiation. Understand first, and then accept if you can. At least, now you know.

Well, here’s to better understanding of cultural diversity in a dynamic world. *Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*

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## IDFR Lecture Series: *South China Sea Dispute: Post-Arbitration Ruling and Beyond*

The South China Sea is one of the most important and busiest sea ways in the world. Thousands of commercial vessels ply through this waterway every day. It is estimated that USD5 trillion in trade value passes through the waters each year and the value is on the increase. The sea is also home to rich fishing grounds and a potentially vast wealth of oil, gas and other natural resources. This maritime area has generated a lot of interests and discussions especially after the ruling by the UN Permanent Court of Arbitration on 12 July 2016.

Accepting the challenge to deliberate this topical issue, the Institute organised a lecture titled *South China Sea Dispute: Post-Arbitration Ruling and Beyond* on 18 August 2016. Organised under the IDFR Lecture Series, the lecture was delivered by the eminent Professor Dr. Vivian Louis Forbes, Distinguished Research Fellow and Guest Professor with China Institute for Boundaries and Ocean Studies, and Collaborative Centre for Innovation and Territorial Sovereignty and Maritime Resources, Wuhan University, China. Professor Dr. Forbes is also a professional and practising cartographer; a marine political geographer; a lecturer in spatial sciences and marine affairs; and a

former Merchant Naval Officer.

Professor Dr. Forbes enlightened the audience on the geography and history of the South China Sea from 1947 to 2016. Professor Forbes then focused on the crux of the lecture; the findings and rulings of the UN Permanent Court of Arbitration on 12 July 2016. Professor Dr. Forbes was of the opinion that these were only the beginning of more contentious issues and potential conflicts in the region.

Professor Dr. Forbes further shared with the audience the mixed initial reaction and acceptance of the dispute by all the parties involved and the international community to the rulings. China's reaction and consternation was one of the main

highlights as China is seen as an emerging Asian superpower in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He also highlighted the importance of the ruling to the current dispute.

Before he ended his lecture, Professor Dr. Forbes shared what may be the future scenario after this ruling is enforced as a hypothetical question rather than an answer, which signifies that it is timely for the governments, politicians and diplomats to start working to find an amicable solution.

The lecture was attended by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries and government agencies, officials from enforcement agencies and think tanks, and academicians.



## Cultural Diplomacy Lecture Series 2 and 3

Following the first lecture titled *Cultural Diplomacy: Searching for ASEAN Common Values* on 5 April 2016, IDFR concluded two more lectures under its Cultural Diplomacy Lecture Series since then.

On 25 August 2016, the second lecture with the title *Cultural Diplomacy within ASEAN and Its Extramural Relations through Multilateral Organisations* was held. It was delivered by Associate Professor Christopher Roberts from

the University of New South Wales, Australia.

Several important issues were highlighted during the session, including cultural diplomacy and the ASEAN Way, the regional order



of Southeast Asia at the time of ASEAN's formation, traditional and non-traditional security cooperation, external engagements, challenges in the strategic and economic domains, and intramural unity in the face of great power influence in the region.

Associate Professor Christopher Roberts shared some crucial information on cultural diplomacy. The keywords used to highlight cultural diplomacy, among others, were aimed at building a robust understanding of a nation through cultural ties across the globe. One of the interesting viewpoints brought forth was the concept of ASEAN solidarity in a diverse social context with the Bangkok Declaration being introduced as the unifying factor within ASEAN, by empowering economic growth, social progress and cultural development.

He highlighted some institutional challenges that occurred between Southeast Asia, East Asia and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, focusing on Vietnam as the case study. The speaker also touched on the Economic-Strategic Nexus in the case of the South China Sea and the 2012 Joint Communiqué.

The third lecture was held on 29 August 2016. With the theme *Culture and Diplomacy*, the speaker was Tan Sri Dato' Seri Utama Dr. Rais Yatim, who is Special Adviser to the



Malaysian Government on Socio-Cultural Matters with Ministerial Status. He is also President of the International Islamic University Malaysia.

In his lecture, Tan Sri Dato' Seri Utama Dr. Rais explored the definitions of culture and diplomacy, relating them to the Malay language as a regional language and the conceptual thinking in the form of ASEAN community. He further took a stand that virtual diplomacy is a new spectrum of diplomacy aiming directly to the digital age community at a global stage of technology. This new digital platform should be implemented within the ASEAN community, especially in education. The speaker also suggested that the implementation of new elements like humour in delivering thoughts on culture to the public would be beneficial.

Tan Sri Dato' Seri Utama Dr. Rais also touched on the three ASEAN Pillars; political, economic and socio-cultural. He said that within the social-cultural context, it is essential for people to learn about *adat* or tradition which he regarded as local wisdom that can be presented in subtle versions, such as in *pantun* or Malay poetry.

Tan Sri Dato' Seri Utama Dr. Rais ended his lecture with a view that ASEAN's culture could be defined through identifying similarities and differences, and working together for the prosperous growth of ASEAN.

Both sessions saw an exchange of ideas and insights between both the speaker and the audience.

## MTCP: Management Training Course for Locally Recruited Staff 2016

IDFR and the Inspectorate Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently organised the first Management Training Course for Locally Recruited Staff under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP). Held from

26 September to 7 October 2016, 25 Locally Recruited Staff (LRS) from 25 Malaysian Missions in 17 countries – Brunei Darussalam, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua

New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Thailand, and Vietnam – attended the training.

The first training course of its kind by the Ministry targeted for LRS

set out to enhance the participants' knowledge in office management. The participants are then expected to share the knowledge gained from the training with fellow LRS at their respective Missions. The course also aims to acquaint the participants with Malaysia, its people and its culture to facilitate their interactions with Malaysian visitors to their respective Missions.

Among the modules conducted were *Roles and Functions of LRS*; *Service Matters of LRS*; *Introduction to Sistem Perakaunan Luar Negeri*; *Security Administration at Mission*; *File Management at Mission*; and *Protocol Matters in Handling Official Visits*. In addition, the participants were introduced to the rich history and culture of Malaysia through a visit to Malacca's historic landmarks, and tours around Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur.

The Closing and Certificate Presentation Ceremony was held on Friday, 7 October 2016. Datuk Mat Dris Haji Yaacob, Deputy Secretary General (Management Services) of the Ministry delivered the Closing Remarks and presented the Certificates of Completion to the participants. Mr. Naeem Sabir Virk from the High Commission of

Malaysia in Islamabad, Pakistan delivered the note of thanks on behalf of the participants. Also present at the ceremony were Datuk Salman Ahmad, the Director General of IDFR; and senior officials from the Ministry, IDFR and the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism.



## Leadership Course for Mid-Level Diplomats and Attachés



IDFR successfully conducted the first Leadership Course for Mid-Level Diplomats and Attachés from 27 to 29 September 2016. Twenty participants, comprising mid-level officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Public Service Department, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Tourism Malaysia, Prime Minister's

Department, Malaysian Investment Development Authority and IDFR, attended the course.

The objectives of the three-day course were to identify the participant's potential as leaders in the Civil as well as Foreign Service; to enhance and strengthen their leadership skills to be effective

officers at Missions, and to develop and enhance their leadership qualities. Modules included *Essential Concepts in Leadership*; *Characteristics of Effective Leaders and Types of Followers*; *Motivating Oneself and Others within an Organisation*; *Risk Management at an Organisational Level*; *Blue Ocean Leadership*; *Identifying Weakness in Leadership and Organisational Management* as well as *Thinking Skills and Essential Models in Problem Solving*.

Designed to be practical with lectures, discussions and simulation exercises, the course encouraged active participation and exchange of knowledge and information among the participants, with the guidance of experts from the National Institute of Public Administration.

At the Closing and Certificate Presentation Ceremony, Ms. Hafizah Abdullah, Director of the Centre for Leadership, Negotiation and Public Diplomacy, delivered the Closing Remarks and presented the participants with certificates. In her speech, Ms. Hafizah emphasized to the participants the Ministry's

expectations and hopes for them to fully utilize the opportunity to enhance their leadership skills as government officials.

Based on the course evaluation, the participants were pleased with the modules and further expressed their satisfaction with the

knowledge, exposure and benefits gained from the course. On that note, IDFR believes that the course objectives have been achieved and will continue to constantly review the modules so that they will be relevant to the needs, vision, mission and aspirations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## Diploma in Diplomacy 2016 Graduation Ceremony

The Diploma in Diplomacy 2016 Graduation Ceremony was held on 6 October 2016 to confer the Diploma and awards to the 14 participants who had successfully completed the in-house training programme for junior officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Held at the Multipurpose Hall, the Graduation Ceremony was officiated by Tan Sri Othman Hashim, the Secretary General of the Ministry. The ceremony

was attended by senior officials of the Ministry, former diplomats, representatives from the foreign embassies which participated in the Regional and International Affairs Module, lecturers, representatives from various agencies involved with the programme, and parents and spouses of the junior officers.

Tan Sri Othman Hashim, in his speech, among others, expressed hope that the knowledge and skills acquired during the six-

month course have enhanced further the officers' understanding on diplomacy and international relations, thus better preparing them for the challenges ahead.

Among the awards conferred at the ceremony were the Foreign Minister's Award (Best Student Award) to Mr. Tham Whye Long; the Deputy Foreign Minister's Award to Ms. Nurul Syaza Azlisha; and the Secretary General's Award to Ms. Kalpana Devi a/p Rajanathan.

## Workshop on Training Needs Analysis for English Language in Diplomatic Correspondence

IDFR conducted the Workshop on Training Needs Analysis for English Language in Diplomatic Correspondence on 26 and 27 October 2016. The workshop aimed to brainstorm ideas to improve the English language programmes at the Institute and to ensure their effectiveness and relevance to the contemporary training needs in the usage of the English language. The workshop also aimed to find implementable suggestions to make the English language programmes more relevant to the usage of the language in the field of diplomacy and international relations. The workshop was attended by academicians, senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IDFR, and former Directors of the

Institute's Language Division.

The workshop focused on six main aspects of language learning and its coordination: Learners, instructors, and stakeholders; Course design, programme content, and curriculum; Training, teaching, and learning methodology and approaches; Testing, assessment, and measurement; Management of training programmes; and Collaboration and partners.

During the two days, the panellists contributed their expertise and insights. Among the significant outcomes of the brainstorming session is the suggestion for IDFR to adhere to a standard reference in language learning. Professor

Dr. Nuraihan Mat Daud, Dean of the Kulliyah of Languages and Management at the International Islamic University Malaysia, suggested for IDFR to use Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for teaching, learning, and assessing its training programmes. This is in line with the framework proposed by the Ministry of Education for language learning.

Another suggestion is for IDFR to focus on integrated skills approach in delivering training, by using authentic materials related to diplomacy and international relations. The panellists also agreed that focus should be given to officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

in enhancing their English language skills and proficiency, as the Ministry is the major stakeholder for IDFR's programmes. The workshop provided many implementable

suggestions which could be realised at the short, medium and long term. The suggestions and insights were compiled into a comprehensive report for future reference. IDFR

is indeed very thankful to all the panellists and looks forward to a continuous collaboration with the panellists.

## Lecture: *China and the World in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

IDFR, in collaboration with the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), organised a lecture titled *China and the World in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* at IDFR on 5 November 2016. Dr. Martin Jacques, an expert on China and author of *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a*

*New Global Order* was the guest speaker. His session was moderated by Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, President of JUST and an IDFR's Distinguished Fellow. The event drew a strong crowd of more than 270 participants from the government and private organisations, embassies, think tanks, academics and media.

This is Dr. Martin Jacques's second visit to IDFR; the first was on 15 September 2009 when his book *When China Rules the World: The Rise of the Middle Kingdom and the End of the Western World* was launched by Dato' Sri Anifah Haji Aman, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

## Diplomatic Training Course for ASEAN Attachment Officers 2016

IDFR was once again chosen to organise the Diplomatic Training Course for ASEAN Attachment Officers from 14 to 25 November 2016. This follows Malaysia's successful chairmanship of ASEAN in 2015 and the success of a similar diplomatic training course in October 2015. Eleven government officials from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and

Vietnam who are presently attached for one year to the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta under the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, were at IDFR to enhance their understanding of the theories, practices and elements of diplomacy, ASEAN and international affairs. Three officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also attended the course.

Themes covered included regional issues, diplomacy, negotiation skills, presentation skills and communication skills. The officers also went on visits to the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation, SME Corporation Malaysia and the Urban Transformation Centre Malacca.

## Workshop on Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy

IDFR welcomed 24 participants from various ministries and government agencies, as well as one each from the Royal Embassy of Cambodia and the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Kuala Lumpur for the Workshop on Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy held from 15 to 17 November 2016.

The three-day workshop aimed to raise awareness on aspects related to cultural diversity, to enhance the participants' understanding on the connection between culture and diplomacy, and to expose them to cross-cultural communication management. The focus of this

year's workshop is mainly on aspects and features within the ASEAN context.

During the workshop, the participants were exposed to the various aspects related to intercultural communication and diplomacy, including the impact and scope of culture in diplomacy, cross-cultural communication styles, cultural intelligence, negotiating across cultures, module on ASEAN, and the intercultural awareness within the ASEAN region.

Mr. Freddy Martin Panggabean, Minister Counsellor from the

Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, was invited as one of the speakers to share some insights into Indonesia's Cultural Diplomacy and how it became the medium of soft power for Indonesia. He also highlighted the cultural diplomacy efforts made by Indonesia, as well as the challenges in effective cultural diplomacy.

The Certificate of Completion was presented by the Director of the Centre for Languages and Cultural Diplomacy, Ms. Romaiza Ab Rahman on the last day of the workshop.

## ASEAN Leaders Programme 2016

IDFR's Senior Principal Assistant Director, Mr. Afdal Izal Md. Hashim was selected to attend the inaugural ASEAN Leaders Programme, which is a platform for ASEAN Leaders who are active in their roles outside of their boundaries of authority and have an impact on the societies around them. The programme, organised by Common Purpose Asia Pacific and supported by the ASEAN Foundation, General Electric, and the United Kingdom Commonwealth and Foreign Office, was held in two parts; the first was in Singapore, and the second was in Jakarta or New York according to the participant's preference. Mr. Afdal Izal was selected via online application based on his voluntary work to promote higher education in rural areas in Sabah as well as his running community which he leads.

For the first part in Singapore, the course held from 26 June to 1 July 2016, was conducted at Conrad Hotel Singapore where the participants were given a challenge with the theme "What makes a city smart?". This challenge needed to be addressed by the participants during their study tours and sessions with dignitaries who have made an impact to Singapore's Smart Nation initiative. Among the study tours were to Singapore Management University, Botanical Gardens, DBS Bank, Airbnb and Singapore's Mass Rapid Transit Authority. The participants also had a session with multinational companies that have an active presence in ASEAN. The highlight in Singapore was a Dinner Reception with His Excellency Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Singapore's Foreign Minister who is also the Minister-in-Charge of Singapore's Smart Nation. The 56 participants from all over ASEAN had a fruitful five-day course and networking



throughout their stay in Singapore.

Part two in Jakarta was held from 23 to 26 August 2016 with 25 participants. The rest of the participants opted for New York in late October 2016. The four-day course in Jakarta was a recap of the participants' experience in Singapore. Jakarta was chosen by the organisers to explore the different approaches made by the Indonesian government vis-à-vis Singapore's efficiency and effective planning and implementation. The study visits in Jakarta were mostly to its local governance authorities and hub for regional activities as ASEAN's Secretariat is based here. A notable mention for the course in Jakarta was a Dinner Talk by the 44-year old Mayor of Bandung, The Honourable Ridzwan Kamil and the Mayor of Jakarta, The Honourable Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or popularly known as Ahok, who is the first non-Javanese to lead the city of Jakarta. The participants also visited emerging private universities that cater to the poor in Indonesia, health institutions, public-

private partnership agencies and orphanages funded by the people and the central and provincial government.

The total nine-day programme was an excellent start for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025: Forging Ahead Together where people inclusivity is more focused on. The participants ranged from non-governmental bodies, government-linked companies, entrepreneurs as well as techno-preneurs, corporate and public officials. Four Malaysians participated this time around; two from the Malaysian Government, one from the industry and one from Malaysia's NGO on preservation of natural resources and green technology.

At the end of the programme, the participants of this leadership programme are alumnus where their work and efforts to a more inclusive and One ASEAN is shared by their respective member states – a people-centred and people-oriented ASEAN.

*Continued from page 5*

Without being overly optimistic, Malaysia performed its leadership role in putting in place a strong mechanism to resolve the South China Sea issues. This is based on a few factors, namely, Malaysia's strong diplomatic relationship with the People's Republic of China since 1974; Malaysia's economic relationship with China, and Malaysia's experience in setting up joint commission to develop oil and gas fields in disputed maritime borders with Thailand and Vietnam. Nevertheless, it is easier said than done. China's interests in South China Sea are beyond economic gains from the exploitation of oil and gas resources. China sees South China Sea as an important part of its wider territory and as a buffer to compete with the influence of the United States of America in the region.

At the same time, in the Statement of East Sea issued by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China states that the issues relating to South China Sea are not relevant to ASEAN as these are bilateral issues between China and individual ASEAN Member States. Note the attempt towards the "divide and rule" approach. If ASEAN accepts this approach, other ASEAN Member States are not supposed to worry about issues facing Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam and the Philippines. This brings the importance of ASEAN as a community; once ASEAN acts as a community, all ASEAN Member States cannot detach themselves from the collective external interest of the ASEAN Community as a whole. ASEAN as a community will and must continue to see the South China Sea issue as an issue

for ASEAN and not for individual ASEAN Member States.

China has also taken several approaches using economic diplomacy. Such approaches include offering to activate what is known as "the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Silk Road" involving connectivity of ASEAN, China and other countries in the Silk Road by rail and sea. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Silk Road will connect China with Andaman Sea and the South China Sea. In addition China, which has a high amount of current reserves, offered to set up the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank to support infrastructure projects. China also offered to have a Treaty of Good Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation with ASEAN Member States. However, one does not see China's readiness to drop its claim over the whole or part of South China Sea.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, one can state that ASEAN Member States, through ASEAN, have been able to avert inter-ASEAN state-to-state conflicts by adhering to the principles enunciated in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, the Bali Concord and the ASEAN Charter. One seldom hears state-to-state full blown conflicts between ASEAN Member States.

Nevertheless, external threats, mainly from the nationalistic and aggressive approach by China, remain a concern for ASEAN and its Member States. ASEAN will have to try different avenues to avert these conflicts such as by way of economic and traditional diplomacy.

Thus, the ASEAN Community is an important step towards ensuring that ASEAN Member States remain a peaceful and neutral region. ASEAN Member States will act as a group or a community and not as individual independent countries.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This article is based on a speech of the same topic delivered at the Oxford University United Nations Association on 3 March 2015.

<sup>2</sup>Timor Leste is now an observer country and waiting for a full membership of ASEAN. For more information about ASEAN, please refer to the ASEAN official website [www.asean.org](http://www.asean.org).

<sup>3</sup>Other aims include to promote collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest; to provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities; to collaborate for the better utilisation of agriculture and industry to raise the living standards of the people; to promote Southeast Asian studies; and to maintain close, beneficial cooperation with existing international organisations with similar aims and purposes.

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