

DIPLMATIC VOICE

A TRIANNUAL PUBLICATION OF THE
INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND FOREIGN
RELATIONS, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
MALAYSIA

ISSN 2289-1277

Cultural Diplomacy Lecture Series



a new demand in diplomacy. He then suggested different approaches to prosper the ASEAN neighbours, for example, by having joint ventures that can benefit the parties involved. He cited two examples – AirAsia and CIMB – which have successfully done so, and have brought about vast economic benefit.

Dr. Farish A. Noor then spoke on the theme of *Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy*. He started by interrogating the term culture which, in his view, is a nominal construct that must be invented. He added that understanding culture means understanding it in terms that are more dynamic and fluid, and not in terms of history, material or elements that can be appropriated. He also added that when states objectify and appropriate culture, problems can arise. However, states can play a role to facilitate the process by making it easier to make changes for learning, interacting and migrating, among others. Dr Farish also went on to state that very few of our historical syllabi today presents Southeast Asia as a region which the ASEAN states emerge from, which is why there is a lack of sense of connectivity and homeliness among Southeast Asians.

The next panellist was Ms. Ng Yeen Seen who spoke on *Youth*

The Centre for Languages and Cultural Diplomacy held the first event under its Cultural Diplomacy Lecture Series on 5 April 2016. With the theme *Cultural Diplomacy: Searching for ASEAN Common Values*, the objective of the discourse was to identify common values which can bridge the gap and lessen the tension among ASEAN citizens and to enhance closer ties among the member states.

The programme commenced with Welcoming Remarks by Datuk Salman Ahmad, the Director General of IDFR. In his remarks, Datuk Salman briefly shared the Institute's plans to focus on cultural diplomacy as a niche area and to develop subject matter experts in that area. He also acknowledged the importance of cultural diplomacy to promote a people-oriented, sharing and caring, rules-based ASEAN Community.

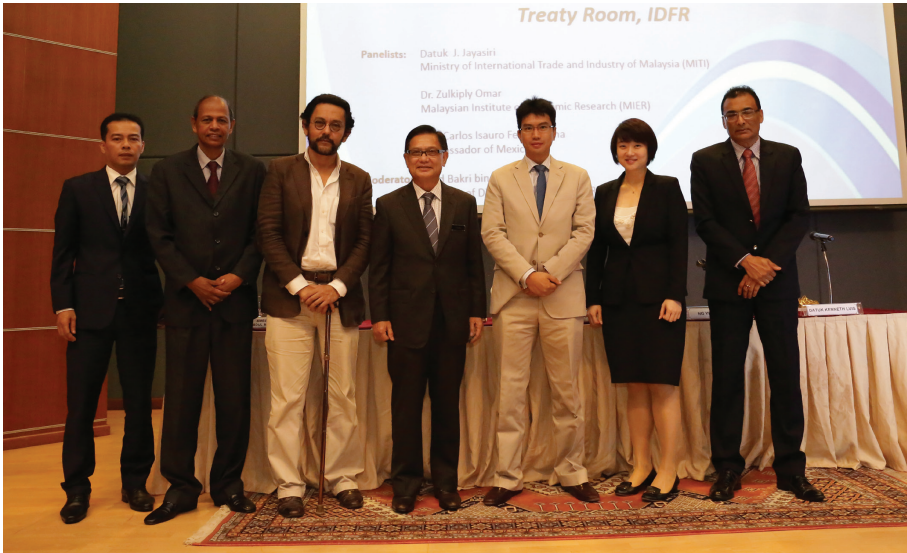
The panellists for the discourse were Dato' Abdul Majid Ahmad Khan, former ambassador and Director General of ASEAN; Dr. Farish A. Noor, Associate Professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University; Ms. Ng Yeen Seen, Chief Operating Officer of the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute; and Datuk Kenneth Luis, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Association of Malaysia. The discourse was moderated by Mr. Mohd. Suhaimi Jaafar, Deputy Director General of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Dato' Abdul Majid focused on the theme of *Prospering Thy Neighbour*. He began by giving a brief overview of ASEAN's current development up to the establishment of the ASEAN Community and how it created

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Datuk Salman Ahmad

Director General of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, Malaysia



1. Congratulations on your appointment as the tenth Director General of IDFR. As the nation heads towards Vision 2020, how do you see IDFR contributing to human capital development?

Answer

IDFR was established as a training institute in 1991. Since its inception, it has been training young Malaysian diplomats and honing the skills of mid-level diplomats in the area of diplomacy and international relations. It also provides training for officials from other ministries and government agencies who are going to be posted overseas, so that they are well prepared to perform their roles and responsibilities in line with the government's expectations.

IDFR has a proud track record of grooming many well-rounded diplomats. As it celebrates its 25th anniversary this July, IDFR will continue to do its best in line with the new circumstances in diplomacy and the relations between nations.

We aspire to make IDFR a learning centre and eventually a think tank, while improving further its training capability and content.

2. In line with the Government Transformation Programme, IDFR embarked on its own transformation programme on 1 July 2015. Can you share its progress thus far?

Answer

I am happy with the progress, which began before I assumed the post. IDFR is now subject matter driven, and is more focused in the following areas of expertise: political studies and economic diplomacy; leadership, negotiation and public diplomacy; languages and cultural diplomacy; and competency enhancement. These centres will be able to operate with more focus. The officers are committed to continue to do more in shaping the institute into a learning centre through organising round table discussions, lectures, workshops

and other discourses, either on our own or by collaborating with other like-minded parties in areas that are more focused in line with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' strategic plan. We seek to develop expertise and establish IDFR's function as a reference point in the identified areas of expertise, and contribute ideas to policy makers and practitioners of the diplomatic statecraft.

We will continue to improve our capacity and develop our own subject matter experts through various means, local and international, as well as from within our institute. Our new officers have started teaching and/or working on case studies. We are now on the verge of engaging the services of two lecturers from overseas to be part of our manpower. We hope to be able to move at a greater pace by the end of the year, once more officers are in place.

Consequently, the institute is deeply honoured and privileged to have the support of His Royal Highness Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah ibni Almarhum Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah Al-Maghfurlah, the Sultan of the state of Perak Darul Ridzuan, as our Royal Patron. Given his passion for academics and scholarly pursuit, His Royal Highness Sultan Nazrin's patronage has elevated the profile and stature of the institute. We are delighted that His Royal Highness has consented to a biennial Royal Address which will feature as one of our prominent events. We look forward to the next Royal Address in 2017.



3. As part of the institute's transformation, you have set cultural diplomacy as IDFR's new niche area. Can you elaborate on this?

Answer

While IDFR has always had a reputation as a training institute in diplomacy and international relations, but to become a centre for studies, it needs to have a niche area. We are actually looking at both economic diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. There is an obvious need to further sharpen our diplomats in their economic diplomacy skills given the importance of the subject in the relations between nations and at multilateral stage, regionally and internationally. Cultural diplomacy, however, is an area that is least tread. Within ASEAN, it falls within the Socio-Cultural Community pillar of the recently established ASEAN Community. Cultural Diplomacy that we want to focus on should not be confined to the traditional definition of culture. It encompasses areas such as social, education, youth, sports, music, arts, languages, and even the promotion of moderation, as enumerated in the third pillar of the ASEAN Community.

4. IDFR plans to engage more research officers. In view of that, where do you see IDFR in five years?

Answer

I believe that in five years, the research officers will form the core of the institute. We hope that they will be able to produce research papers and contribute to the formation of ideas. In the process, they will also enrich themselves in their respective areas. As a future think tank, the need to enhance the teaching and discourse is also a priority. Hence, while some officers will conduct research and produce papers, others will contribute by teaching.

5. What do you consider requisite traits of a good diplomat?

Answer

There are many requisite traits of a good diplomat. He or she must be intelligent, courageous, adaptive and inquisitive. He or she must also be able to write well, and to be multilingual would be to his or her advantage. Additionally, he or she must meet the aspiration of the country well, be able to adapt to any situation that he or she is

put into, and be able to defend his or her countries' stand. These are just some requisite traits – the list is endless.

6. As a senior Ambassador, can you share some key advice for our young diplomats?

Answer

My advice would be to always keep an open mind. When you are sent for posting, you are at the service of the country and the people. You must always see how you can best contribute to our nation's foreign policy and enhance relations with the host country. Last but not least, make yourself relevant at all times – associate with other diplomats and locals, and read as much as possible.

Datuk Salman Ahmad was appointed IDFR's Director General in November 2015. He joined the Administrative and Diplomatic Service in 1979 and in February 2015, retired after 36 years of service. His ambassadorial postings include to the Federal Republic of Germany, Australia, Czech Republic and Brunei Darussalam. Datuk Salman also served in various capacity at the Malaysian Mission in the Philippines, Thailand, Japan and India. He is married with three children.



Keeping up with New Realities in World Diplomacy

By Dr Azhari-Karim

To foreign policy practitioners, 2015 was a very busy and difficult year as most countries had to face up to the new realities in world diplomacy. Amid changes that have become the new normal in diplomacy, countries were going for short-term gains in relationships, decision-making that were generally not tied to the future and when multiple-issues would just hit at the door.

Many could not have predicted that the United States would open up relations with Iran and Cuba once again. In Europe, once considered a closed continent, countries agreed to take in migrants to the number of over one million. Russia came back into world politics with a vengeance. It showed it is still a power to be reckoned with when it went to war going after the rebels and the ISIS forces in Syria, sidestepping the United States 'interests' in the region. Russia also got into a troubled relationship with Turkey, a NATO ally, over the latter's shooting down of a Russian air force plane near the Turkish-Iraqi border.

Over in the East, China applied its economic and financial might to extend its influence in the region by resurrecting the old Silk Route that once linked Asia to Europe, now called the 'One Belt One Road' initiative and establishing the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank to spureconomic links between China and the rest of the world. China's overzealousness in asserting herself globally had rattled some raw nerves in the region and beyond. Such actions including the upgrading of her presence in parts of the disputed areas in the South China Sea had invited a retaliatory show of assets by the United States in return,

posing uneasiness for countries in the region.

Multilateral cooperation still coloured the relationship between countries in trade, finance and investment. Activities on the side of economic growth have been put in by several member countries of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation into setting up the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), the equivalent of a free trade area for its members located in both sides of the Pacific Corridor. An even more conscious attempt at managing hard deals in negotiations ended with a long-term agreement on Climate Change by the 185 countries represented in Paris in November. Most notably, this was the first time that Governments were present together with corporate and civil society players to iron out a deal to commit funds, technology and support for future undertakings on climate change issues.

On the downside of things, however, the world was shocked by the growing violence perpetrated by so-called terrorists in the name of ISIS that took place in Paris, France in November and San Bernardino, California, United States in December. A wave of anti-Muslim sentiments followed not only in the United States but also in Europe and elsewhere. Cool heads could still prevail however in other parts of the world with Muslim-majority Governments calling for alternative approaches to the problem. This included a proposal to provide 'deradicalisation' training for would-be ISIS recruits. In reaction to the above attacks and the deteriorating situation on peace prospects in Syria, two developments that seemed to be viewed at cross-

purposes by many, have been started; one at the United Nations Security Council and the other on the battlefield in Syria. In the former, delegates were unanimous in voting for a peace proposal to be effected in Syria but having no clear agenda for the ousting of its President, Assad from the scene. In the latter case, the United States decided to commit its Special Forces into the war in Syria.

Muslim unity was also not spared the problems associated with the increasing violence posed by the so-called ISIS-backed terrorists. It had to confront division within the Muslim *Ummah* over the appropriate position to be taken concerning issues mentioned above. The Palestine State issue made headlines in New York. The Israel-Palestinian conflict, however, continues unabated. More damaging will be the possibility of the ISIS issue leading to further the sectarian differences between the Sunnis and the Shiites in Islam. On the Syrian problem, Saudi Arabia has put together a coalition of 34 Islamic countries to comprise fighting units to be sent to Syria to fight the ISIS there and in Iraq. This move is expected to be resisted by the mainly Shia Iranians. The situation may turn complicated now that Iran has moved closer to the West, having renewed relations with the United States after a long hiatus over the nuclear issue.

On a more specific note, moving to the ASEAN region, member-countries at the 27th ASEAN Summit in November in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, were eagerly welcoming the ASEAN Community into being, a feat that came 48 years after the grouping's establishment in 1967.

Since then ASEAN has overcome historical, geographical and cultural divisions to forge integration based on a three-pillared approach. ASEAN's cooperation within the ASEAN Plus-Three (China, Japan and South Korea) saw some landmarked agreements and understandings. Looking inside the innards of ASEAN, there is also little interest in debating where ASEAN is going next, whether to follow the European Union (EU) way or the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) way. More and more now ASEAN citizens especially the youth are discussing the future prospects for ASEAN with extreme caution in light of uncertainties that are happening all around them as well as abroad. Recognizably these are focused on a need for change and the ability to identify the actual drivers of change with greater immediacy.

Presently to reach the goals as specified in the three Blueprints – Political-Security, Social-Cultural, and Economic – now identified to take off by 2030 to be in line with the United Nations-fixed Strategic Development Goals, ASEAN clearly has come to a point when it is felt that a revamp is in order. In the months and years ahead there are three issues that the regional body needs to respond to: degree of institutionalisation, an action time table and search for an identity. However, none of these issues are stand alone. We see them linked to one another and are closely related to what is taking place outside ASEAN as discussed above.

What is expected post-2015 firstly, is the rush within ASEAN to set up more institutions to match the expansion of issues and cooperation. On one hand, while more institutions will contribute to

more involvement by the citizens in ASEAN affairs and decision-making as desired for some time already, the only difficulty in meeting such an expectation is that it can face problems of administrative-constriction while the item is being circulated and discussed at the myriad of meetings already crowding the conference agenda in the grouping.

Secondly, the calendar of meetings and events in any one year thus far is beyond imagination including the two Summits at the highest level of Governments, the Official levels, the Committee levels, the Consultative Committee levels, the Action Group levels, the Civil Society organisations, Interest groups levels and the meetings of the various ASEAN and its linkages representing cooperation at the functional and specialised levels. There are also networking meetings in Defence, Socio-Cultural and Trade Facilitation platforms. Just keeping up with the bureaucracy and the amassing of data that is being generated from meeting to meeting appear endless. While more institutions may be admirable from the perspective of encouraging people participation, the drawback is that such a decision-making has become a complex exercise. Expressions including the following: ASEAN moving at the speed of its slowest members, ASEAN reaching its limits of tolerance and ASEAN allowing too much laxity for its members in decision-making have been offered as mere rationalisations. All of these seemed to lead towards an 'ASEAN lock-out' that has delayed several important decisions such as dealing with the migrants, haze and even intra-ASEAN trade.

Finally, in its search for an identity, the only thing that works for the benefit of all ASEAN members has

been the so-called ASEAN Way, a process perfected out of consultation and discourse at all levels of leadership applied religiously in mitigating inter and intra-ASEAN conflicts. Admittedly it does not work in conflict resolution situations but it has to a certain degree prevented conflicts from sliding into open military skirmishes. The strength of the ASEAN Way lies in its adherence to the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention in the affairs of a member-state. At the same time, as much as ASEAN has tried to keep itself from being labelled as another European Union-type organisation in the future, it has in fact in reality been preparing for an 'Asian Union' of some sort with ASEAN expected to lead the pack. ASEAN is keen in ensuring its future identity within this framework. ASEAN therefore sees the TPPA as complementing the free trade regime and economic integration efforts already emplaced in the ASEAN Economic Community to be realised by 2025. Anything more dramatic will have to involve all the ten member countries. Only Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia of the present member countries are in. Very likely the rest may join the TPPA in good time.

But it must be noted that with ASEAN's solid support and leadership behind the growth of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2025 and the TPPA by 2030, the whole Asia-Pacific region is set for an intense period of diplomatic manoeuvring in the coming years.



A former Malaysian Ambassador and now Fellow of the Foreign Policy Study Group, Dr. Azhari Karim also lectures in Futures Studies and Scenario Planning, Strategic Analysis and Crisis Management for governments and corporate entities at home and abroad. He can be contacted at info@drazharikarim.com

Ecological Globalistan – Political Terroristan

From Paris (COP 21), Of Nearly Everything

By Dr. Anis H. Bajrektarevic

Speaking in Paris on 7 December 2015 – only a morning after the landslide victory of the far right French political party, the UN Secretary General again reminded the world leaders that “More than 1 billion people worldwide live without electricity. Nearly 3 billion people depend on smoky, dangerous traditional fuels for cooking and heating. Access to modern, reliable, affordable clean energy is equally important for ending extreme poverty and reducing inequality...The clock is ticking toward climate catastrophe.” Politely ignoring the domestic French politics, as much as the climate change hard-evidence, all international nihilists, professional optimists and other status quo conservators would call it ‘*environmental alarmism*’... or political alarmism – the same... What is really the state of our planet?

Back in 1990s, there was a legendary debate between two eminent scientists; Carl Sagan, astrophysicist and Ernst Mayr, evolutionary biologist. The issue was the question of all questions – is there any intelligent life out there? Sagan – closer to mathematics, and the counting of stars and worlds attached to it – argued that out of all the innumerable planets like ours, life must flourish at many of them. Quite a few of them, he claimed, must have developed advanced forms of living beings. Mayr – on the other hand – argued the opposite. His pessimism was coming from his profession, not from his character that was as vivid and optimistic

as Sagan’s: What is a biology for natural sciences, that is a history for human sciences – spacetime-lined story of the past with a predicament, or sometimes, an inevitable consequence, for our future. Ernst Mayr took our mother planet as an example to illustrate his claim.

The so-called biological success of species could be measured by their number, configuration and durability. By all three parameters, Professor Mayr stressed, the most adaptive systems are those conducting fast (non-cognitive) mutations caused/triggered by any environmental stress (e.g. varieties of bacteria, creatures stuck in a fixed ecological niches, like beetles or some sea biotas), and surviving even larger crisis including cataclysmic events. But as we go up the scale of what we assume as intelligence, the systems become less adaptive and scarcer by number, configuration and durability. Arriving to the top (as we classified a tip of the intelligence pyramid), from low mammals to higher primates, apes and Homo sapiens, the species tend to image a rarifying picture – by all three biological success parameters. By Mayr’s account, the average lifespan of upper-intelligence echelons is only around 100,000 years. Out of the billions of species that have inhabited (and some still inhabiting) our planet, we – along with other higher primates – are late arrival and temporal ‘accidents’. He attributes this to our intelligence, labeling it as a ‘lethal mutation’ – not a blessing but a curse. Mayr’s finding

is intriguing: The higher the intelligence, the more likely it is to end up in self-destruction, past the transitioning on a curve of initial development.

Indeed, our environmental, financial and politico-economic policies and practices are creating the global stress for us and all other species. Deep and structural, this must be a crisis of our cognitivity. Do we want to prove Mayr right with our global *jihad* against cognitive mind?

Cognitive Deficit Crisis

From Copenhagen, Durban, Rio+20 to the Paris COP 21, our conclusion remains the same: We need principles and accorded actions, as this is the only way to tackle the grave problems of this planet. We are lacking the elementary consensus in/on the Bretton Woods institutions, on the Tobin tax initiative, in the WTO Doha Development round, on nuclear non-proliferation (and NPT), on migrations, on the Middle East and ‘regime change mantra’, in the IPCC, on the post-Kyoto negotiations, and finally on the alarming state of environment. Ergo, on a global scale we fundamentally disagree on the realities of this planet and the ways we can address them¹.

I am not moralizing, idealizing or agonizing. The world based on agreed principles and commonly willing actions is not a better place. It is the only way for the human race to survive.

Clearly, our crisis is real but neither

sudden nor recent. Simply, our much-celebrated globalisation deprived from environmental concerns can only cage us into the ecological *globalistan*.

Climate Change – a Brutal Terror against Nature

We place ourselves in a centre of a materialistic world – this, of what we perceive as a universe of dead (and linear) matter. Therefore, what we euphemistically call (anthropogenic) Climate Change is actually a brutal war against (living) nature. It is a covert armed conflict, since we are predominantly using the so-called monetizing-potent ‘technologies’, instead of firearms in our hands. (For this purpose hereby, the army units are replaced by the *demolition-man* of other name; ‘transnational corporations’.) This armed insurgency is waged against most of what is beautiful and unique on Earth – on the planet that gave us time and space enough to survive as species and to evolve as cognitive life. Thus, the known sustainability matrix of three maximums (of good, of species, and of time) becomes the *minimum* species, *minimum* time with *maximum* harm.

Intentionally or not, it is a synchronized attack: We are steadily and passionately polluting our public sphere with the diverting banalities manufactured by the so-called social networks, reality shows, ‘celebrities’ and the like – trivializing the contents of our lives. At the same time, we are massively contaminating our biosphere (waters, lands, air and near outer space) with non-degradable and/or toxic, solid or aerosol, particles radiation and noise – irreversibly harming our habitat. We pollute the time as well, turning it into

cross-generation warfare’s battlefield: Our dangerous patterns might seal off the fate for untold number of generations and sorts of species to come. No wonder, our corrosive assertiveness has (time-space) parallels: acidifying of oceans and the brutalizing of our human interactions, as well as over-noising both of them, are just two sides of a same coin. What is the social sphere for society that is the biosphere for the very life on earth: the (space/time – content/form) frame we all live in.

It seems we pay our space (linear possessions) by our time (future). Therefore, our crisis cannot be environmental, as it was never a financial or security (war on terror) – our crisis must be a moral one. This is a cognitive deficit crisis, which we eagerly tend to spend in a limbo of denial!

Panta Rhei (All is moving)

Nature does not change. Change (as a cosmic constant) is a nature itself. Still, even Heraclitus understood: this force is never eruptive or destructive (explosive, combusting and polarising) but eternally gradual and constructive (holistic, inclusive and implosive).

We are drifting, dissolving and retreating on all levels and within each and every organic (marine and continental biota) or inorganic (soil, glaciers, water, polar caps, etc.) system. For the grave, burning (hydrocarbon) planetary problems, our human race needs an urgent and lasting consensus which presupposes bravery, virtue, vision and creativity. All this will not result from fear of coercion (social haircut, austerity, financial straitjacket), from a further militarization of our societies caused by the accelerated

confrontations called ‘war on terror’, but from the universally shared willingness to accord our common planetary cause. Cognitive mind can do it all.

Let us start our global war on terror – but this time – on the terror of a global environmental holocaust caused by our cognitive deficit crisis.

¹ Additionally, we fundamentally disagree on a role to be played by technology, even on the very definition of what should be considered as technology. **Technology is not a state-of-art of science; technology is a state of mind!** It is not a linear progression in mastering the natural science disciplines, but a cognitive, emphatic cluster mastering of the critical insight.

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Dr. Anis is chairperson and professor in international law and global political studies, Vienna, Austria. He authored three books: *FB – Geopolitics of Technology* (published by the New York's Addleton Academic Publishers); *Geopolitics – Europe 100 years later* (DB, Europe), and the just released *Geopolitics – Energy – Technology* by the German publisher LAP. *No Asian Century* is his forthcoming book, scheduled for mid 2016. He can be contacted at anis@corpsdiplomatieque.eu

Panel Discussion on *ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together*

By Augustino Jude



On 13 January 2016, IDFR, in collaboration with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, organised a panel discussion with the theme *ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together*. The event was the first forum for the year under the Economic Diplomacy Series, one of IDFR's flagship discourses.

The programme commenced with Welcoming Remarks by Datuk Salman Ahmad, IDFR's Director General followed by Welcoming Remarks by Professor Dato' Dr. Noor Azlan Ghazali, Vice Chancellor of UKM.

In his Keynote Address, Dato' Steven CM Wong, Deputy Chief Executive of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, shared valuable experience from his 25 years' research on ASEAN. Acknowledging the fact that ASEAN at times is unable to meet or exceed the expectations of its member states, Dato' Steven CM Wong pointed out that ASEAN has evolved into a meta-organisation. It is seen as a network in which each component is as important as the whole and decision making

is distributed throughout the network. This idea of ASEAN as a meta-organisation presents its own challenges that need to be addressed if the ASEAN 2025 vision is to be realised. He added that as ASEAN edges closer to its 50th anniversary in 2017, it should refresh its relevance and functionality while maintaining its roots.

The keynote address was followed by a panel discussion on *ASEAN Post 2015: Challenges in ASEAN Integration*. The panellists were made up of Professor Dr. Rashila Ramli, Director and Principal Fellow of IKMAS, UKM; Associate Professor Dr. Bhanupong Nidhiprabha of Thammasat University; Associate Professor Dr. Toh Mun Heng of NUS Business School; and Mr. Michael Teoh, Founding Director and Lead Trainer of Thriving Talents Sdn. Bhd, and the discussion was moderated by Dato' Muhamad Noor Yacob, Director of the Asia Pacific Centre for Economic Diplomacy.

Dato' Muhamad Noor Yacob began by sharing the outcome of

the ASEAN Economic Integration Forum 2015 which took place at St Anthony's College, University of Oxford. The forum, held on 10 November 2015, discussed a host of economic governance challenges facing ASEAN Member States. Professor Dr. Rashila Ramli, as the first panellist, gave an overview of the Roadmap for ASEAN Community 2025. She highlighted the importance of a rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN Community, where the people enjoy human rights and fundamental freedom as well as a higher quality of life, which will then reinforce their sense of togetherness and common identity. This is in line with the Eight Resolutions highlighted by the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly which covers a wide range of area such as politics, social, economy and women. Dr. Rashila further pointed out key political and socio-cultural issues facing the ASEAN community and ways to overcome them such as rethinking the South China Sea issue and a better linkage of ASEAN Vision with global narratives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Associate Professor Dr. Bhanupong Nidhiprabha then spoke on *Thailand's Perspective of ASEAN 2025*. He focused on the economic issues and challenges faced under the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) as well as highlighted the importance of the ASEAN nations' continued commitment in tackling the remaining measures from the AEC 2015 Blueprint. Dr. Bhanupong mentioned that Thailand looks forward to the full realisation of the ASEAN Community as a single

market and production base. He concluded that each nation should be cautiously optimistic and must be willing to accept a step backwards in order to go two steps forward in propelling towards the ASEAN Community 2025.

Associate Professor Dr. Toh Mun Heng spoke on *Singapore's Perspective of ASEAN 2025* especially from the economic viewpoint. He said ASEAN has steadily grown despite facing some constraints. He outlined some of the challenges that lie ahead which might delay the full realisation of

the AEC blueprint such as non-tariff barriers, local ownership rules, inefficient customs procedures, equity limitations and differing product standards. These barriers should be resolved in order to move forward. Dr. Toh concluded his session by sharing his view on ASEAN's future as a region with simplified rules, closer regulatory cooperation, greater transparency, a talented and well-educated pool of workers as well as a large, vibrant consumer base.

Speaking on *The Role of Youth in ASEAN Community 2025*,

Mr. Michael Teoh stressed the importance of integrating values, culture and the history of ASEAN as part of formal education. He also urged the younger generation to be more collaborative rather than competitive and stressed the importance of volunteerism among the youths.

The event was attended by senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies, members of the diplomatic corps, academicians, and representatives from NGOs and think tanks.

Public Lecture on *Defining Islamic Statehood*

By Sarah Zahirah Ruhama



The war in Syria and Iraq saw the rise of the Islamic State (IS or Daesh), which established its caliphate in eastern Syria and Western Iraq in the summer of 2014 after the capture of Mosul and the defeat of the Iraqi army. Since then, the group has expanded its influence across more territories, committed atrocities and brutality to Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and launched series of indoctrination through social media that lured many more to join and sympathise with their dream of an Islamic State.

But what *is* an Islamic State? And does it already exist?

In a mission "to put clarity, share the light and lower the heat", the Cordoba Initiative of New York and IDFR co-organised a public lecture titled *Defining Islamic Statehood* by Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, founder of the Cordoba Initiative on 26 January 2016.

An Islamic State, according to Imam Feisal, can be defined by three categories: demographic, penal code and legal (or *Maqasid*

Shariah). Firstly, a state can be considered Islamic simply by having a large population of Muslims that makes up the majority in the country. Secondly, a state which implements a penal code that outlaws un-Islamic practices can also be considered an Islamic State. Thirdly, an Islamic State can be defined as a state which upholds the *Syariah* law.

An Islamic State is also composed of three key elements. The first is the declarative statement on the acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God. This is followed by legitimisation where collective vicegerency must comprise the following: Consultation (or *Shura*), Consensus (or *Ijma'*), and Allegiance towards the Rulers (also known as *Bai'ah*). The final and most important element in an Islamic State is the outcome deliverables that should provide economic and social justice.

As part of its efforts to clear the misunderstandings surrounding the issue, the Cordoba Initiative is

undertaking a monumental task of producing a *Syariah* Index which can delineate and index modern Islamic States using quantifiable measures, and itemize Islamic principles of good governance particularly on the preservation of life, intellect, property, dignity, religion and lineage. The *Syariah* Index project seeks to reframe the discussion on a wide range of issues, including the relationship between religion and the state, the relationship between *Syariah* and constitutionalism, the relationship between Islam and other faith communities, Islam and international human rights instruments as well as the judicial reform mechanism and the rule of law.

'The fundamental principle of an Islamic State', emphasised Imam Feisal, 'is the creation of an ideal environment for life's test and challenges'. He maintained

that Islam is by nature inclusive, as the religion recognises many prophets of religions that came before Islam such as Judaism and Christianity, and he believed that this could be a good starting point for inter-religious dialogues.

When asked whether Daesh is a product of a conspiracy, Imam Feisal pointed to the existing rivalry between Shiite and Sunni as a contributing factor to the current situation, and the fact that there is no political or economic parity among the various sectarian and tribal groups in the Middle East. In answering another question on the issues of rights of women and children, Imam Feisal stressed that their rights are protected in Islam under the category of family and lineage, and these rights are also clearly stated in the holy Quran.

When asked about the challenges, Imam Feisal explained that a

major challenge in applying the *Syariah* Index measurements was determining the value. This challenge proves difficult to overcome as different societies have different values and expectations. However, he shared the data showing that Malaysia is consistently in the top five positions in all areas of the measurement. In the final analysis, he discovered that states which are economically strong correlate positively with the *maqasid* of life and the *maqasid* of honour. He concluded the lecture by saying that more accurate data and extended research could assist further in defining Islamic Statehood.

The participants were from the diplomatic corps, think tanks, ministries, NGOs and universities. Also present was YAM Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin Tuanku Muhriz, founder of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS).

Diploma in Diplomacy 2016: Activities in March and April 2016

By Romaiza Ab Rahman



The Diploma in Diplomacy 2016 started on 1 March 2016, with 15 participants. The participants are made up of 14 officers from the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia and one from the Research Division of the Prime Minister's Department. The diploma programme is expected

to conclude in September 2016.

The programme is compulsory for junior Foreign Service officers prior to their first posting at Malaysia's Diplomatic Missions. The main objectives of the programme are to prepare the participants for their roles, responsibilities and functions as Foreign Service officers and to enhance their skills and knowledge on aspects related to foreign policy, diplomacy and international affairs.

The Opening Ceremony of the programme was held on 2 March 2016. It started with Welcoming Remarks by Datuk Salman

Ahmad, Director General of IDFR, and the course was officiated by Dato' Kamilan Maksom, Chief of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, on behalf of the Secretary General. In his speech, Dato' Kamilan emphasized to the participants the Ministry's expectations and hopes for them to fully utilise the opportunity to enhance their competency as diplomats.

Throughout the month of March, the participants went through the first module on *Administrative and Service Matters as a Malaysian Foreign Service Officer*. They learnt various aspects related to consular, information technology, government procurement, financial management, inspectorate matters, auditing, security at Mission, human resource management, legal matters, protocol work and diplomatic correspondence.

Most of the classes were conducted at the Ministry by the respective

divisions. The modules were delivered through hands-on training, analysis of case studies, simulation exercises and interactive lectures. In addition to the sub-modules on administration and service, the participants were also exposed to grooming and social etiquette at the beginning of the programme. Their daily classes also included *English Language for Diplomacy* and Foreign Language modules. They also had the opportunity to network with 24 participants of the *Diplomatic Training Course* who came from 19 countries as well as 14 participants from Lao PDR who were attending courses at IDFR under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP).

As part of their training, the participants are also required to organise events and intellectual discourses. They are responsible for the overall planning, preparation, coordination and implementation of

the events/activities. A few series of tea chats or talks, dinner talks, corporate social responsibility programmes, panel discussions, and visits have been included throughout the six months. On 14 April 2016, the participants successfully organised their first event, *The Ambassadors' Tea Chat Series 1*. Tan Sri Radzi Abdul Rahman was the guest speaker for the session, where he shared his experience as a former ambassador and Secretary General of the Ministry. During the semi-casual session, the participants learnt some lessons on what it means to be an effective diplomat.

At the end of April, the participants completed nearly 200 hours of the *Administrative and Service* module, 80 hours of the *English Language for Diplomacy* module, and 70 hours of the Foreign Language module. The participants look forward to the next four months of the programme.

MTCP: Diplomatic Training Course for International Participants 2016

By Sarah Zahirah Ruhama

IDFR recently organised the *Diplomatic Training Course for International Participants 2016* from 16 March to 1 April 2016. The course, funded by the MTCP, is designed to expose aspiring junior diplomats to the various aspects of theories, practices and elements of diplomacy and international affairs.

Established in 1980 as Malaysia's commitment to South-South Cooperation, MTCP has become a platform for Malaysia to share its development experiences with other developing countries. MTCP is premised on the principle that the development



of a country is dependent on the quality of its human capital and resources. In this regard, MTCP

emphasises on human resource development through training in the form of short-term and long-term

courses, as well as practical attachments and provision of services and experts. Since its inception, more than 30,686 participants have been directly trained under MTCP. Today, MTCP is extended to 142 recipient developing countries in various key areas such as diplomacy, industrial technical training as well as management and public administration.

As a leading training institute for diplomacy and international relations, IDFR has been conducting courses under the MTCP since 1991. *The Diplomatic Training Course for International Participants 2016* is the first of several MTCP programmes to be held at IDFR this year. The continuing MTCP courses demonstrate Malaysia's unwavering commitment to share

its development experiences and expertise with fellow developing countries.

This year, 24 participants from 19 countries underwent 17 days of training covering various issues including national and international security, economic diplomacy, media relations, counter-terrorism and international negotiations. The participants were from Azerbaijan, Brunei, Cambodia, Cook Islands, Guinea, Jordan, Kenya, Lao PDR, Mauritius, Malaysia, Nigeria, the Philippines, Samoa, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe.

Designed to be practical with talks, discussions and simulation exercises, the course encouraged active participation and exchange of information between the

participants. Throughout the course, the participants were able to gain a glimpse of Malaysia's experience in managing its foreign policy, economy and development matters, and were exposed to various diplomatic skills such as public diplomacy, media relations and negotiations. The participants also learnt about Malaysia's involvement at the multilateral stage, and Malaysia's experience in planning for an inclusive development. Under the introduction to state-level governance module, the participants were taken on a trip to Negeri Sembilan and Malacca to learn about the unique blend of cultures in Malaysia as well as the working relationship between both State and Federal Governments.

Speechwriting Workshops for Wisma Putra Officers

By Siti Farsha Murni Izami

IDFR, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia organised two speechwriting workshops, IDFR's first training programme for the year, on 18 and 19 January for 16 undersecretaries and principal assistant secretaries, and on 20 and 21 January for 38 assistant secretaries.

The workshops were conducted by Mr. Simon Lancaster, the founder of United Kingdom based Bespoke Speechwriting. Mr. Lancaster has written speeches for many Britain's politicians and business people including Chief Executive Officers for Unilever, Cadbury, HSBC and Intercontinental Hotels, to name a few. He was a full-time speechwriter for Tony Blair's Cabinet from 1999 to 2007. In that role, he wrote



speeches on issues related to politics, defence, trade, aid, public service reform, education, health, and business. Mr. Lancaster's practical experience in rhetoric is supported by extensive academic research. He is the author of *Speechwriting: The Expert Guide* (Hale, 2010), which is considered by many to be the definitive text in speechwriting, and *Winning Minds: Secrets from the Language of Leadership*

(Macmillan, 2015).

The participants commented that they now have a clearer understanding of the art, principles, style and strategies of speechwriting, which includes how to research and find new angles on old issues. They were also equipped with a wide range of practical speechwriting tools to make their speeches more effective and engaging.

Building Blocks of Good English

By Haliyath Zahiyah Kamal Mustaffa



With the aim of enhancing the participants' skills in being competent users of the English language, IDFR organised the *Building Blocks of Good English* workshop from 22 to 26 February 2016. The five-day workshop was attended by 30 officers from various ministries and government agencies.

The participants learnt to demonstrate usage of the English language in a variety of contexts. Through extensive guidance and exposure of accuracy (i.e. grammatical components) and

interesting topics of discussion with a wide range of vocabulary, they were able to apply the knowledge and skills they grasped confidently in the activities (i.e. group work and exercises) that followed the learning process.

The structure of the workshop was designed in such a way that the participants were able to recall, review and refresh the skills, enhance them through the lecture and later apply these acquired skills in the designed activities. On the first three days of the workshop, the participants

brushed up on their basics of the language usage and were given more knowledge of the structure and opportunities to apply this knowledge through a variety of activities such as speaking and writing as the utmost important language skills to enhance their proficiency level.

Accuracy also plays an important role in determining one's fluency, therefore language skills that were covered during the last two days of the course were *Tense Confusion: The Past, The Present, The Future* by Ms. Haliyath Zahiyah Kamal Mustaffa, and *Questions and Commands* by Ms. Elsa Fallida. The participants were later given opportunities to apply these grammatical structures through various form of exercises, conversational activities and language games.

Certificates of completion were presented to the participants by Ms. Wan Faizah Wan Yusoff, Principal Assistant Director of the Centre for Languages and Cultural Diplomacy on the last day of the workshop.

Young Diplomats Programme for Johor Student Leaders' Council

By Muhammad Ariff Mohamad Nizam

IDFR once again collaborated with the Johor Education Department and the Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) to organise the *Young Diplomats Programme for Johor Student Leaders' Council* (JSLC) from

21 to 25 March 2016.

The programme is designed to cultivate the participants' interest and to familiarise them with current international diplomatic practices and other areas in international

relations. Throughout the five-day programme, the participants underwent classroom lectures, discussions, group and individual practical and simulation exercises, study visits and briefings. This integrated teaching and learning



methodology is adopted in order to meet the objectives of the programme which include to expose the participants to key principles of diplomacy and foreign relations; to familiarise them with diplomatic and communication skills; and to advance their knowledge and proficiency of the English language.

The programme began with introduction to the key role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Malaysian Missions. The participants were exposed to the Ministry's formulation and

its implementation of foreign policy, ASEAN and diplomacy during their one-day visit to the Ministry in Putrajaya. On the third day, they were taken to two foreign missions, namely, the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the High Commission of Singapore. The visit gave them some knowledge and understanding of these two countries as well as the role of their respective Missions in Malaysia and their bilateral relations with the host country.

A diplomat must also acquire

knowledge on social etiquette and protocol as well as insight into culture. As such, on the fourth day, the participants attended a lecture on protocol, grooming and social etiquette, delivered by Mr. Sophian Ab Rahman, the Protocol Officer of the National Palace. The session was followed by a fine dining practical at Berjaya Times Square Hotel where the participants were guided on one of the most important social skills of a diplomat.

The Closing and Certificate Presentation Ceremony was held on 25 March at IDFR and the ceremony began with a *Zapin* performance by the participants. Datuk Salman Ahmad, the Director General of IDFR, delivered the Closing Remarks and presented the certificate of attendance to the participants. This was followed by a Remark of Appreciation by Mr. Ahmad Faidzul Mat Yazid, representative from the Johor Education Department.

The programme received positive feedback from the participants and IDFR hopes to further collaborate with the Johor Education Department and IRDA to organise similar programmes.

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and Culture. Ms Ng started with the fact that 60 per cent of the ASEAN population consist of youths and how the feeling of connectedness to ASEAN is more important than building ties on economic matters. She was of the opinion that the ASEAN Community cannot be built solely on tangible interests; a sense of shared value is crucial and that will unite and drive the community together.

The last panellist, Datuk Kenneth Luis, spoke on how education can

enhance cultural diplomacy. He suggested that current happenings must be included in the curriculum and the textbooks should mirror the changes. Datuk Kenneth further suggested that we work together through education to come up with universal shared values.

The panel discussion was followed by a question and answer session, before the event ended with a memento presentation to the panellists by Datuk Salman. The event was well attended by

senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies, members of the diplomatic corps, and representatives of NGOs, think tanks and academics.

The Centre plans to organise another event on cultural diplomacy later in the year, and encourages the participation of all diplomacy practitioners.

By Norhidayah Md Raziap



