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ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat



Aman was accompanied by senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to ASEAN in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Foreign Ministers and senior officials of other ASEAN Member States as well as the Secretary-General of ASEAN and senior officials from the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta attended the retreat.

The retreat was an informal platform for Foreign Ministers to exchange views on various issues as well as to follow up on the decisions made by the Leaders during the 25th ASEAN Summit held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. Among important issues highlighted during the retreat were Malaysia's priorities as Chairman of ASEAN, ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision and its Attendant Documents and South China Sea. In light of the growing threat of radicalism and violent extremism across the globe, the Foreign Ministers issued a Statement condemning the violence and brutality committed by the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria, particularly on the apparent barbaric beheading of a Japanese citizen. Malaysia also took the opportunity to propose for ASEAN to revisit the proposal for an ASEAN Common Time Zone which was first mooted by the Leaders in 1995.

The year 2015 will be recorded as a historic year for Malaysia and ASEAN. It is Malaysia's fourth Chairmanship of ASEAN since the association's establishment in 1967. Malaysia officially took over the chairmanship from Myanmar on 1 January 2015 for a period of one year amid high expectations. The chairmanship of ASEAN 2015 will mark Malaysia's leading role in the realisation of the ASEAN Community and in developing the community's Post-2015 Vision. Under the theme, *Our Vision, Our Community, Our People*, Malaysia strives to steer ASEAN closer to the peoples of Southeast Asia by making it part of their daily lives and by creating a truly *People-Centred ASEAN*.

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat (AMM Retreat) was the first in a series

of ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meetings and other Related Meetings under Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2015.

The retreat was held from 27 to 28 January 2015 at the Sutera Harbour Resort, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The retreat was preceded by several other preparatory meetings, namely, Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR), ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) and 4th ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group Meeting (ACCWG) on ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision.

The Malaysian delegation to the retreat was led by Dato' Sri Anifah Haji Aman, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia. Dato' Sri Anifah Haji

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Tan Sri Ab. Kadir Mohamad

Former Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia

Q. You recently wrote a book titled Malaysia-Singapore Fifty Years of Contentions 1965-2015. What was the purpose of writing it?

A. First, to present a Malaysian perspective on the main issues which caused various setbacks in the relations between Malaysia and Singapore ever since Singapore became an independent and sovereign country in 1965. I decided to write my book after having read more than a dozen writings on the same subject emanating from the Singapore side, as reflected in the bibliography of my book.

Second, by narrating in some detail what actually happened before, I hope fellow Malaysians will be able to identify where our side could have done better in the past and decide how we should act in the future in terms of protecting and promoting the national interest.

I hope my book will also enable both sides to reflect on the past in order to be able to manage the future more effectively. All the subject matters highlighted in my book – water, Batu Puteh, Pulau Pisang, railway land, causeway/bridge, land reclamation, defence – are not dead issues. Malaysia and Singapore can start the next fifty years by ensuring that matters still outstanding relating to, or emanating from, these issues are handled correctly for the good of both countries.

Q. In terms of Malaysia-Singapore relations, what are some of the lessons that Malaysia should learn from the past for the betterment of the two countries' relationship?

A. Regarding the past, the most important lesson was conveyed by Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in his speech when he made reference to and launched my book on 4 February 2015. On that occasion, he said: "We Malaysians cannot blame Singaporeans totally for all these bilateral problems. We must also look at our-



selfes in the mirror from time to time". Unfortunately, those words have been misinterpreted by the media to suggest that Malaysia was at fault some of the time. Actually, Tun Abdullah meant to subtly remind Malaysians not to repeat the mistakes they had made in their dealings with Singapore for the past fifty years. For the future, I have written the following words in the postscript of my book: "In their bilateral engagements with Singapore in the next fifty years, Malaysian negotiators may need to think and act exactly like their Singaporean counterparts. If that is the only way to arrive at livable solutions, so be it. Special circumstances require exceptional responses".

Q. As former Advisor on Foreign Affairs to Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the fifth Prime Minister, how do you think the Ministry can enhance Malaysia's foreign policy?

A. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should not wait for issues to arise before recommending the national policy positions for adoption by the government. The Ministry should be thinking ahead all the time and strategizing the national posture on bilateral, regional as well as multilateral and other international issues. The minimum objective is to prevent the country falling on the wrong side of issues. The maximum objective is to enable the country to benefit from any emerging situation. In recent years, the Ministry had been managing issues very much on a day-to-day basis due

to personnel constraints, both in terms of numbers and quality. Appropriate solutions must be found for this serious logistical problem. The Ministry, as the lead national agency at the international level, must be more proactive and preemptive in all matters.

Q. As a former Secretary General of the Ministry, what do you think are the critical skills that our young diplomats need to develop to ensure the effectiveness of our country's foreign policy?

A. The best diplomats are those most knowledgeable about international matters. This includes knowing a lot about history and having extensive background data concerning particular issues. The best negotiators are those with good information about all aspects of the subject matter to be negotiated. There is no short cut towards acquiring these attributes except through extensive research and reading. A good command of languages, especially the English language, is also necessary for writing strategic analyses and for conducting face-to-face negotiations. Attentive reading will also help in developing these language skills.

Q. In your opinion, what can IDFR do to enhance the training of our diplomats?

A. IDFR must clearly identify and make its trainees comprehend the core business of the Ministry of Foreign



Affairs, which is to protect and promote Malaysia's national interest with regard to sovereignty, security, international politics and global economics. IDFR's success will be measured by how well it prepares students in strategic thinking, planning and execution of these primary functions of diplomacy. No doubt IDFR must also train officers to be good at carrying out other tasks such as personnel management, providing consular services, carrying out protocol duties and implementing public diplomacy. All these tasks, however, are house-keeping matters of the Ministry which require efficient performances more than anything else. IDFR's basic responsibility is to deliver graduates who are creative and innovative, capable of accurate analyses, and then making recommendations on what is best for the country in the realm of international relations.

Q. What are your thoughts on Malaysia winning the Non-Permanent Member seat in the United Nations Security Council for 2015-2016?

A. Most member states of the world body covet having a term as a non-permanent member in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Malaysia had to use all its persuasion

skills to become the only Asian candidate to fill the Asian Group quota for the 2015/2016 term. Then Malaysia had to exhaust its diplomacy to secure the required number of votes from member states in the General Assembly to finally secure the seat. These supporters will expect Malaysia to perform credibly as a Council member. When Malaysia served in the Council in the past, we were noted for taking balanced and principled positions on international peace and security issues debated inside or voted upon in the Council. It would be wise to maintain that approach. Nonetheless, this time around Malaysia should also work hard to leave an imprint for the good name of the country and for the benefit of the international community. A subject matter which is sufficiently non-partisan and non-controversial for Malaysia to pursue would be the implementation of real-time aircraft tracking and sharing of information pertaining to flight risks, having in mind the aviation disasters in 2014 which affected the country deeply. No doubt this is principally a matter under the purview of the International Civil Aviation (ICAO) Organisation. But the UNSC can exert much influence on the same subject especially as one of the tragedies occurred over a war zone. Malaysian officials manning our

seats in the UNSC and the ICAO should closely coordinate their efforts to attain an urgent international consensus on this vital matter.



Tan Sri Ab. Kadir Mohamad was born in Kampung Pagar, Pahang on 3 July 1943. He attended Malay School Perjom (1950-52), Clifford School Kuala Lipis (1953-60), Malay College Kuala Kangsar (1961-62) and the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia (1964-67) where he graduated with B.A Hons. in Political Science in 1968. He was later conferred by the University with the degree of Doctor of Letters Honoris Causa in 1999.

He joined the Malaysia Foreign Service in 1968. He served in various capacities in Malaysian diplomatic missions overseas in New York, Saigon, Brussels, Washington and Islamabad as well as at home in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was appointed Secretary General of the Ministry (1996-2001); Ambassador-at-Large MFA (2001-2003); Senior Advisor MFA East Timor (2001-2003); Advisor for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister of Malaysia (2003-2009); and Advisor at the National Security Council Secretariat Prime Minister's Department (2010-2013).

He was also the Leader of the Malaysian Team/Agent of Malaysia at the International Court of Justice in the Case Concerning Sovereignty Over Pulau Ligitan and Pulau Sipadan (Malaysia/Indonesia) 2001; and in the Case Concerning Sovereignty Over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge (Malaysia/Singapore) 2008.

Published writings by Kadir Mohamad: (i) 1975: *Abandon Mission Saigon, a short story inside Number One Wisma Putra*, IDFR 2006; (ii) *Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Malaysian Diplomacy, an article inside Profiles of Malaysia's Foreign Ministers*, IDFR 2009; (iii) *Malaysia's Territorial Disputes - Two Cases at the ICJ*, a book published by IDFR 2009; (iv) *Malaysia-Singapore Fifty Years of Contentions 1965-2015*, a book published by The Other Press, Kuala Lumpur 2015.

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Dato' Sri Anifah Haji Aman hosted a Welcome Dinner in honour of ASEAN Foreign Ministers and Delegates on 27 January 2015 at the Magellan Sutera Harbour Resort. The guest of honour at the dinner was the Chief Minister of Sabah, Datuk Seri Musa Haji Aman. Dato' Sri Anifah Haji Aman also hosted lunch in honour of ASEAN Foreign Ministers, ASEAN Secretary-General, ASEAN SOM Leaders and Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN on 28 January 2015 at Gayana Eco Resort, Malohom Bay, Gaya Island.

Apart from that, an Outreach and Public Diplomacy programme was

also held on the sidelines of the retreat from 24 to 26 January 2015 at Suria Mall in Kota Kinabalu. The Opening Ceremony was officiated by Datuk Othman Hashim, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 25 January 2015. This programme was made possible with the cooperation of the Secretariat of the Council for Anti-Trafficking in Persons, Ministry of Home Affairs and the Department of Information Sabah.

Overall, the retreat was a success. The Foreign Ministers and Senior Officials had a substantive and fruitful discussion on issues of common concern.

With the success of the retreat, Malaysia needs to double its efforts to ensure the success of other important ASEAN meetings during its chairmanship this year.



Speech by Dato' Sri Anifah Haji Aman, Minister of Foreign Affairs at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat Welcome Dinner

The Honorable Datuk Seri Musa Haji Aman, Chief Minister of Sabah,

Your Royal Highness,

Distinguished ASEAN Colleagues,

Excellency Le Luong Minh,
Secretary-General of ASEAN,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to extend a very warm welcome to you and to all delegates to Kota Kinabalu for the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat. *Selamat Datang* or as in Sabah we say *Kopivosian* which means welcome.

I am indeed extremely pleased that it is now finally my turn to have the opportunity to host all of you in Malaysia. It gives me a wonderful opportunity to return in small measure the kind, generous and extremely warm hospitality that many of you have accorded to the Malaysian delegation and to me personally, during previous ASEAN Meetings.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Sabah State Government, and in particular to the Chief Minister of Sabah, the Honorable Datuk Seri Musa Haji Aman, for graciously offering to host this ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat.

It is the first meeting in our calendar for 2015 and I had wanted to welcome all of you to my home state, which is the closest approximation I could muster to inviting you to my own house. Therefore, Datuk Seri Musa's gracious offer to host this meeting in Kota Kinabalu has in fact given me my first wish for the year! Thank you, Datuk Seri Musa.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I proceed any further, there is a pleasant "duty" I would like to



dispense with and I use the word "duty" with extreme fondness. I take this opportunity to warmly congratulate my dear friend and colleague, Excellency U Wunna Maung Lwin, the Foreign Minister of Myanmar, as well as to commend the Government and people of Myanmar, for the incredible Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014. Your excellent stewardship of our Association and the unstinting efforts you expended in further advancing the ASEAN agenda last year is indeed highly commendable.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

Malaysia is deeply honoured to take the helm of the ASEAN Chairmanship this year. We are mindful of the challenges ahead of us in the coming months, which will see key ASEAN aspirations come to fruition. Never one to rest on our laurels, ASEAN will set our sights on yet bigger aspirations for the years to come.

In this regard, 2015 will no doubt be a historic and deeply meaningful year for all of us. Decades of regional integration efforts will finally culminate in the establishment of an ASEAN Community by the end of the year.

Tomorrow, I will share with you Malaysia's priorities for 2015. I look forward to having a full and frank exchange of views on how we can move the ASEAN agenda forward in the months

ahead. With this huge task ahead of us, we must continue to work together, as we always have, in the spirit of friendship and togetherness, as one community.

Despite our schedule, which I would like to imagine is not a particularly heavy one, I hope colleagues will take the opportunity of being here to explore and enjoy the experiences that this city has to offer. Kota Kinabalu is close to the beach, with white sandy beaches, tropical rainforests, beautiful islands, and of course, Mount Kinabalu, to which the city owes its name.

But for this evening, let us relax and enjoy ourselves amongst friends and good company. I believe the Sabah State Government has arranged a special cultural presentation for our entertainment this evening, so let's let our hair down and have a good time.

On that note, let me once again welcome all of you to Malaysia, to Sabah and to our first ASEAN Meeting for this year. I hope we will have a meaningful year ahead and for this evening, a relaxing one.

Terima kasih!

ASEAN Post-2015: A New Vision for the ASEAN Secretariat¹

By Natalie Shobana Ambrose

It has been 48 years since the formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the five founding countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Since then, there have been 13 Secretary Generals who have led the ASEAN Secretariat and at present, Le Luong Minh of Vietnam is the current Sec-Gen.

The chairmanship which technically² rotates annually based on the alphabetical order of the English names of Member States has done so 29 times making this the fourth time Malaysia has had the privilege of being Chair. This Chairmanship however is particularly significant as 2015 marks the realisation of the ASEAN Community.

With Growing Power and Influence Comes Greater Responsibility

ASEAN has come a long way since its inception. Envisaged as a unifying, stabilising organisation in the mid 60's, it has evolved beyond what the founding fathers had envisioned it to be. Today there are more than one thousand ASEAN-related meetings and the grouping has not only grown from the original five members to ten members³ but has also garnered influence to bring together at least 27 nations together through various meetings including the ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asian Summit and other significant meetings.

It is not surprising then that there is a growing list of countries that have requested to be more engaged with ASEAN, the most recent being Norway, Ecuador, North Korea and Mongolia who have requested a more significant and recognised relationship with the regional grouping following countries with existing formal partnerships such as Australia, China, Canada, European Union, New Zealand, South Korea, India and Japan

which make up ASEAN +3 and ASEAN +6 groupings.

This is a positive sign and a noteworthy achievement for an organisation that was founded at a time where member states were recovering from post-World War Two colonization and enjoying the first fruits of a flourishing economy.

The significance of the growing influence and power of the grouping places greater responsibility and pressure on its nerve centre – the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC). The Secretariat based in Jakarta was set up in February 1976 by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN⁴. Its most basic function is to provide for greater efficiency in the coordination of ASEAN organs and for more effective implementation of ASEAN projects and activities. Its mission is to initiate, facilitate and coordinate ASEAN stakeholder collaboration in realising the principles of ASEAN as reflected in the ASEAN charter. But with a budget of US\$17 million in 2014 that has since increased by US\$2 million in 2015, it is still a marginal amount for an organisation of its standing.

To add some perspective, the European Union, though not an accurate comparison⁵, spends six per cent of its annual budget on staff, administration and maintenance of its buildings. There are 33,000 people employed by the European Commission comparatively to the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) which has an employee roster of 300, of which at least 200 are professional staff. Not only is staff strength limited, the Secretariat building which has been creatively partitioned to house the various divisions is bursting at the seams and guilty of overcrowding.

While ASEC resources are limited to ensure that smaller, developing economies within the grouping are able to afford the equal contribution amount and to ensure no member state has additional influence, many have noted

that the grouping should not move at the speed of the slowest.

For a grouping with the second-fastest growing economy in Asia⁶, and a GDP that has multiplied many times over (300 per cent since 2001 to be exact), it is necessary that its Secretariat have the resources, mandate and talent it needs to address the needs that come with ASEAN's growing prominence, its wider mandate and increased activities.

Strengthening the Nerve Centre

Part of the ASEAN Secretariat's vision⁷ is to be a globally respected centre, and to be able to realise this vision, the secretariat needs to be strengthened. While there are multiple high level task forces in place, in particular the High Level Task Force on Strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat and Reviewing the ASEAN Organs (HLTF), studies being conducted and consultants hired, ultimately the mandate to strengthen ASEC lies not with the Secretary General or Secretariat but with the member states and heads of governments. From the perspective of the ASEAN way of consensus decision-making processes, this makes a lot of sense but to truly strengthen the Secretariat, a more inclusive decision-making process needs to take precedence.

Attracting Top Talent

The general theory is that proportionate compensation attracts, retains and motivates employees. While the budget increase of US\$2 million has contributed to a salary raise for ASEC staff in the past year, the new salary scale pales in comparison to other multilateral organisations within the region. To put this in perspective, the annual salary for Junior Professionals (lowest ranking international staff) with the Asian Development Bank ranges between US\$75,800 and US\$91,000⁸ compared to the annual starting salary of approximately US\$40,000 for the

Senior Officer position (lowest ranking regional staff recruit) with the ASEAN Secretariat. This might explain why wealthier ASEAN countries, such as Brunei and Singapore, have very few nationals working at the Secretariat while at the same time the CLMV grouping are hard-pressed to produce candidates for openly recruited positions.

While the job requirements listed under the advertised vacancies sets high standards, not every hire is measured by the same yardstick because the calibre of candidates who apply often enough fall short of the stated requirements.

Conversely the pressures to quickly replace staff due to the high turnover rate within ASEC is immense, forcing less qualified and under experienced candidates to be recruited instead, which affects the quality of work produced and discredits the recruitment process.

While it is easy to blame low salaries for not attracting top talent, it is equally important that the work promised is stimulating. While job postings set out to attract high calibre candidates, the job itself should be challenging and engaging enough to retain quality candidates. While the general assumption that working in multilateral organisations demands high quality research, allows for informed input and requires strategic thinking from employees as listed in ASEC openly recruited staff (ORS) job postings, the Secretariat mandate is rather limiting placing greater emphasis on secretarial services of minutes writing, meeting organisation and serving as a resource person recollecting decisions of past ASEAN meetings, making it difficult to retain and motivate top talent.

Such issues highlight the need for a Secretariat that is equipped and prepared to carry out ASEAN's post-2015 agenda and vision efficiently.

In order to do so, there is a deep need

to strengthen the recruitment process and to adopt a competitive salary scheme which in turn will attract high calibre talent to provide the necessary leadership needed to assume increased authority.

One avenue to ensure top ranked candidates are recruited and retained is to establish a Young Professionals Programme which recruits those skilled in areas relevant to ASEAN operations which will allow them to gain valuable on-the-job experience and help new recruits gain a broad overview of ASEAN and its secretariat's policies and work.

Developing an Effective Research and Communications Division

Not only are ASEAN member states politically, economically and socially diverse, the grouping runs on two different economic and development tracks between founding and newer members. The grouping, through its engagement with multiple dialogue partners, also operates at different levels and through multitrack diplomacy channels. Such diverse interaction creates an ideal environment that allows for an exchange of ideas, knowledge and research. It can also serve to support the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) and Narrowing the Development Gap (NDG) – the two specific ASEAN's frameworks that recognise the value of addressing sub regional issues to support ASEAN-wide goals.

At present, there is a deficiency in research and evidence based policy making within the region and grouping which warrants an increased emphasis to develop expertise and knowledge upon which sound policy decisions can be made. Having a platform, focal point and one-stop centre that collates and standardises data, churns out analysis, and provides policy-makers, stakeholders, decision makers and the public with useful, pragmatic, action-oriented recommendations to address issues,

questions and challenges facing the grouping is important and is presently lacking.

Developing and strengthening a research arm will enable the ASEAN Secretariat to centralise and preserve institutional memory. At present, institutional knowledge and human repositories are lost when people move on, be it for a new job, relocate or retire. The different pillars and organs also tend to work in silos causing a lack of information share. Another drawback is that due to restrictions in resources, time and mandate, partnerships with familiar institutions continue to dominate.

It is important to note that besides the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) which member states are heavily reliant on, there is a diverse network of think-tanks that work in partnership through the ASEAN-ISIS network of think tanks⁹ whose expertise ASEAN can tap into. These think tanks, though bound by a common objective of fostering regional cooperation and peace, can be divided into three broad categories: government, independent and hybrid, and have been at the forefront of regional affairs and Track 2 diplomacy.

Such collaboration efforts will strengthen the current output of the secretariat thus facilitating public understanding of policies and the work of the Secretariat and grouping. These collaborative efforts would supplement the thinking process providing ideas and emerging problems into policy issues and can serve as an informed voice which builds confidence with various stakeholders.

Apart from that, it is important to build the skills of staff in research management which will also allow for ASEC to produce substantial value added publications that will in turn create greater profile of the grouping and Secretariat. It would also develop good research governance, increase

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Economic Diplomacy Series 1/2015

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC): Making the AEC a Success

On 12 February 2015, IDFR together with the World Trade Institute and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) jointly organised a panel discussion under the Economic Diplomacy Series 1/2015 with the theme, *The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC): Making the AEC a Success*. The event was graced by Dato' Hamzah Zainudin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The panel discussants were Dato' Muhamad Noor Yacob, Chairman of Malaysia Automotive Institute as the moderator and three panelists, namely, Datuk P. Ravidran, Senior Director of ASEAN Economic Cooperation Division, Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), Associate Professor Dr. Sufian Jusoh, Distinguished Fellow of IDFR and Mr. Fahmi Rais, Founder of the Aspirant Group Singapore and TAG Global Communication Malaysia.

The objective of this panel discussion was to discuss the various efforts undertaken by ASEAN and Malaysia as the chair for ASEAN in 2015 to promote and realise the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2015. The discourse also aimed to identify the success factors and challenges to the AEC in its implementation of initiatives to achieve an ASEAN single market and production base, discuss opportunities and limitations for business and investing communities in leveraging upon the AEC.

The first panelist, Datuk P. Ravidran gave an overview of the AEC. The AEC is one of the three pillars to achieve a cohesive ASEAN Community. The population of ASEAN is about 625 million consisting of relatively young people with growing spending power. The other two pillars are ASEAN Political-Security Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

The AEC is made up of four important pillars – a single market and production base, a highly competitive economic competition region, a region of

equitable economic development and a region fully integrated into the global economy.

Datuk Ravidran also cleared doubts for those who thought that ASEAN is European Union (EU) in the making. Under the AEC, each member state will maintain its own currency and retain its national sovereignty, unlike the EU that trades using a common currency and has Brussels as the central control for the EU.

In his concluding remarks, Datuk Ravidran mentioned that Malaysia has implemented almost 85.5 per cent or 372 out of 435 measures under phase I to III and 43.8 per cent or 95 out of 217 targeted measures under phase IV. The total measures for Malaysia is higher than ASEAN as we include both ASEAN-wide and country-specific measures.

The panel discussion continued with Associate Professor Dr. Sufian Jusoh who spoke on *The ASEAN Economic Community: Views from the Ground*. He focused on two main issues which are very important under the AEC – Services and Investment.

Associate Professor Dr. Sufian began by stating that the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) was signed by ASEAN Economic Ministers on 15 December 1995 in Bangkok, Thailand. The objectives of AFAS were to facilitate the establishment of free flow of services in the AEC by 2015, eliminate substantial barriers to trade in services, improve efficiency and competitiveness of ASEAN services and liberalise trade in services through progressive liberalisation.

Liberalisation of services under the AEC undertakes the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) Model of World Trade Organisation (WTO), which allows for a free movement of professionals and business person as agreed upon in the Movement of Natural Persons Agreement

(MNP). MNP Agreement makes allowances only for temporary entry of skilled workers, professionals, executives and it is also limited to business visitors and contractual service suppliers. The MNP agreement does not permit permanent entry to those searching employment and unskilled labour. The GATS model is unlike the EU and NAFTA model that makes provision for everybody in the member states to move freely within the member states to secure jobs or do business freely.

The next important aspect that Dr. Sufian elaborated on was the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA). The ACIA is an ASEAN instrument that aims to enhance the attractiveness of the ASEAN region as a single investment destination. It is expected to result in a more conducive business environment, encourage investors who are not yet in ASEAN to do business in the region, provide greater confidence among current investors in the region to continue and expand their investments, and increase intra-ASEAN investment through the liberalisation of five main sectors, namely, facturing, agriculture, fishery, forestry, and mining and quarrying.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Sufian mentioned that the awareness of the AEC is still very low among member states and investors. There are many aspects that need to be looked into if the AEC is going to be achieved by the end of 2015. In order to draw in more investors into ASEAN or even intra-ASEAN, there should be harmonisation of ASEAN investment laws and procedures at a certain level.

The third speaker, Mr. Fahmi Rais who is a businessman and wants to expand his business in ASEAN, gave his opinion and voiced some of his concerns based on personal experience. He stated that as an ASEAN business citizen, he wants to be able to tap into the nearest market and be able to receive more privileges and be-

nefits. He also uttered his concern that the political condition of ASEAN member states should remain stable at all times.

Mr. Fahmi gave some recommendations and suggestions to further improve and enhance business in ASEAN. First, he suggested that ASEAN should have its own Intellectual Property Protection law. This will provide confidence not only among intra-ASEAN investors but could also attract more foreign direct investment into ASEAN. There should also be more ASEAN brands and he sug-

gested that every business registered in the country of origin within ASEAN member states should be registered with ASEAN as a suffix in a bracket – The Aspirant Group (ASEAN). This will encourage more ASEAN born businesses to go international and it is also for branding purposes.

Mr. Fahmi also suggested that the government of the host country should facilitate new businesses in their country in obtaining the network required as well as to be transparent in delivering information on taxes, budget and incentives so that businessmen

are able to make sound judgement on the prospect of their business. He also reiterated that he will not venture to expand his business to another country if both countries' governments are not in agreement.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Fahmi suggested that ASEAN should come up with its own ASEAN passport and that ASEAN should conduct courses to help member states to appreciate each other's values and cultures so that we can all work together harmoniously and appreciate each other.

Round Table Discussion on *Recent Security Threats and Freedom of Expression*



A round table discussion titled *Recent Security Threats and Freedom of Expression* was held on 12 March 2015 at IDFR. The objective of this discourse was to discuss the subject of freedom of expression in the context of recent security threats which included how the Government's concept of moderation is essential to counter radical extremism and the emergence of cyber threats in Malaysia and the region.

The panelists were Professor Zaharom Zaim, Professor of Media and Communication Studies at University of Nottingham, Malaysia, Dato' Akhbar Satar, President of Transparency International Malaysia and Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady, Lecturer at the Centre for Foundation Studies, International Islamic University, Malaysia. Dr. Tunku Mohar Tunku Mohd Mokhtar, Head of Political Science Department also of International Islamic University, Malaysia was the moderator.

The event commenced with welcoming remarks by Dato' Hussin Nayan, Director General of IDFR. He stated that the nexus between freedom of expression and security threats would hopefully be the outcome of this discussion. It is a fact that free expression has become an apparent, relevant and necessary tool in an increasingly interconnected world. This enables all people regardless of race, gender or ethnicity, the right to speak their mind and share opinions without fear or favour. This essential foundations of an independent and progressive society must be exercised carefully as its application would have negative consequences and could inflict great damage to human progress, peace and security.

Professor Zaharom Nain delivered his presentation titled *What Threat? Whose Security? – Crisis, Control and Freedom of Expression*. He began by speaking about the threats posed in line with the idea of national security and the three ways in which the threats to freedom of expression can be viewed; the existence of physical threat, non-physical threat and the crisis of hegemony. He also spoke

about the existence of the shroud of secrecy in Malaysia.

The discussion continued with Dato' Akhbar Satar who delivered his talk titled *Why Extremist Ideologies have Taken Root in the Minds of the Youths in Malaysia and the Region?* He spoke about the youths in Malaysia which have been a target of extremist groups via the internet and the madrasas. Certain groups of people were also forced to go to the Middle East, with the promise of the 'glory of heaven' in exchange for their support. The misinterpretation of religious texts also contributed to the recruitment process for these groups while Malaysians were quite sympathetic towards the problems of the Middle East especially when it comes to fighting against the "so called western powers".

The final panelist was Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady who spoke on *Freedom of Expression and its Implication to Malaysia's National Security*. He started by establishing the idea that freedom of expression is one of the core elements guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1946 and Malaysia has provided the legal framework for the expression of freedom although there have been a set of preventative laws such as the

Internal Security Act (ISA), Prevention of Crime Act (POCA) and the Sedition Act. He elaborated on the recent Charlie Hebdo tragedy which took place in Paris and the influence of Malaysian teenagers by the Islamic State (IS) propaganda. The IS is taking advan-

tage of the freedom and the internet facilities to spread its ideology and facilitate the recruitment of Malaysian youths. The speaker also touched on the "national approach" where it is necessary to promote harmony, peaceful coexistence and mutual respectability.

This discussion was attended by ambassadors, high commissioners, government officials, academicians, and representatives from think tanks and NGOs.

Round Table Discussion on *Extremism and Militancy with the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), Singapore*

On 21 January 2015, three IDFR officers attended the round table discussion on *Extremism and Militancy with the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), Singapore* held at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia. It began with the introduction of the two guest speakers, namely, Ambassador Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow at ISAS, Singapore and Dr. Elmira Akhmetova, Research Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia.

Quoting from E.H. Carr's, "*What is History?*," the first speaker, Ambassador Dr. Chowdhury highlighted the importance of causation in deliberating the extremism question. He claimed that a mixture of complex social political phenomena – history, politics, sociology, ideology and economics is the causal factor in extremism or radicalism. To establish this, Ambassador Dr. Chowdhury probed the examples of the Middle East, the Arab Spring and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, among other things.

From the examples, it was evident that violence begets violence and bred extremism. Thus, he underscored the need to intellectually deradicalise and

defang the extremist group. In so doing, he voiced his support for Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's proposal last November at the East Asia Summit for an East Asia Summit symposium to tackle religious extremism. Ambassador Dr. Chowdhury also concurred with Prime Minister Najib's statement a few days earlier where he was quoted as saying that unlimited freedom will give rise to extremism, reiterated. On the question of countering extremism or radicalism, he put forward several hopefully workable proposals which included enhancing strategic communication, strengthening criminal justice system, improving gender ratio of the workforce and recruitment drive, promoting the prominent role of regional and international organisations such as ASEAN and the United Nations, and changing existing twisted culture and values via academics and think tanks.

The second speaker, Dr. Elmira Akhmetova observed that extremism is widespread – existing throughout history. Noting that extremism is "spreading like cancer in the Muslim world" today, which is evident from the Arab Spring and the so-called Islamic State, she suggested that all of these are related to politics. While acknow-

ledging the importance of freedom of speech, Dr. Akhmetova asserted that the freedom of speech slogan chanted risked encouraging extremism and the Paris tragedy exemplified such. She also lamented that Islam has become synonymous for terrorism after 9/11 and that the War on Terror was also associated with Islam. Be that as it may, according to CNN, referring to some study of renowned researchers, the terrorist threat posed by Muslims had been exaggerated. Dr. Akhmetova also emphasised the importance of respect for different races or ethnic groups and their rights, especially the minority rights, in order to achieve and keep workable peace and stability which would benefit the whole world.

Approximately 40 people attended the round table discussion including government officers, researchers, academicians and members of the diplomatic corps. IDFR was represented by Major Rtd. Mohd Ridzuan Hj Mohd Shariff, Senior Deputy Director of the Academic Studies, Research and Publication Division, Mr. Dev Kumar s/o Balakrishnan, Senior Deputy Director of the Regional and Security Studies Division and Ms. Lim Hui Chin, Assistant Director from the Office of the Director General.

ASEAN-Australia Engagement: Trends and Prospects for the Region

IDFR kick started its first Ambassador Lecture Series for 2015 by having the honour of the presence of His Excellency Rod Smith, Australian High

Commissioner to Malaysia to the Institute on 31 March 2015. The Ambassador Lecture Series was held in conjunction with Malaysia's Chairmanship

of ASEAN and provides a platform for all heads of mission from member states and regional partners to share their views and perspectives on topics

related to the engagement of their respective countries with ASEAN.

The panel discussion comprised three panelists and a moderator. H.E. Rod Smith, as the first panelist, gave a brief history of Australia's presence in Malaysia which dates back to before Malaysia's independence. He also mentioned some of Australia's engagement with ASEAN member states which include constructing bridges in the Mekong, providing clean water systems in Indonesia, supporting governance and public financial management programmes in The Philippines and rejuvenating the Colombo Plan. The Colombo Plan provides scholarships for both Australian students to carry out their internship in Malaysia and high achieving Malaysian students to pursue their research and postgraduate studies in prestigious universities in Australia. Currently, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has begun an intensive capacity building programme for ASEAN member states on implementing competition law. It is hoped that through such engagement,

the bilateral relation of both countries could be strengthened. H.E. Smith concluded by saying that both regions should find ways of maximising economic opportunity and minimising strategic risk.

The second panelist, Dato' Dr. Mohd Yusof Ahmad, Head of Institute of ASEAN Studies and Global Affairs from Universiti Teknologi MARA mentioned that the bilateral relation between Malaysia and Australia is strong. However, tension is building up in the region with China and India as a rising power, South China Sea dispute among the claimants and Australia's close relationship with the United States. If not managed carefully, these factors could affect Australia's relationship with ASEAN. Dato' Yusof also made an important observation that ASEAN should not only be at the receiving end but also be reciprocal to Australia if it wants to continue the strong bilateral relation with Australia. Under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, many Asians are migrating to Australia and Australians living in Malaysia. Hopefully this

could further enhance ASEAN and Australia's relationship in the future.

The final speaker was Ambassador Jojie Samuel, Deputy Director General from the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia. Ambassador Jojie in his presentation mentioned that he has just returned to Malaysia after attending the ASEAN-Australia forum which was held in The Philippines from 25 to 27 March 2015. During the forum, Australia has expressed its interest to engage more with ASEAN including on knowledge and experience-sharing. In this regard, an Action Plan has been developed to study ASEAN and Australia's relation at a more strategic level.

The session was moderated by Tuan Syed Mohamed Bakri Syed Abd. Rahman, IDFR's Director of Training. Among the attendees were members of the diplomatic corps, academicians, government officials, representatives from think tanks and university students.

Study Visit to New Delhi

By Farhana Mohamed Nor

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever" ~ Mahatma Gandhi

Organised by both IDFR and UKM, students of the IDFR-UKM Master in Social Science (Strategy and Diplomacy) Programme 2014/2015 went on a study visit to New Delhi, India from 23 to 27 April 2015. The nine-member delegation included a UKM lecturer, an IDFR officer and seven students. We left at approximately 6.50 pm local time on 23 April and arrived at the Indira Ghandi International Airport after a four-and-a-half hour flight.

Right after passing immigration, we were warmly welcomed by an officer from our High Commission in New Delhi. After collecting our luggages, we were ushered to an 18-seater bus and were taken straight to Aagami Ho-

tel, located at the heart of New Delhi's business centre. Amidst the darkness of the night, we managed to catch glimpses of the streets of New Delhi and we knew that we were in for a treat.

The next day, the study visit kicked off with a visit to the Indian Council of World Affairs, Sapru House to attend a conference titled *Non-Traditional Themes in Asian Foreign Policies*. Prior to the commencement of the conference, the students were able to mingle with the other participants and engage with prominent locals. Among the speakers at the conference was Malaysia's very own Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa, Chairman of the Institute of

Strategic and International Studies, Malaysia, who discussed the topic from Malaysia's point of view.

Later that afternoon, we paid a visit to the Institute of Defence and Analyses (IDSA) and attended a lecture on *New Developments in India-China Relations*. We were made to understand that IDSA is an Indian think tank for advanced research in international relations, especially strategic and security issues and also trains civilian and military officers of the Government of India. The session was very interactive and the students were proactive in asking questions to the speakers.

On 25 April, we attended a lecture and

a round table discussion on *Geopolitics in the Indian Ocean* at the National Maritime Foundation (NMF). NMF is a non-governmental maritime think tank where all its activities are underpinned by the need to continuously sensitise fellow citizens to the importance of maritime security, to continuously remind them of India's maritime heritage and to reawaken maritime consciousness, especially amongst India's youth by using the instrumentality of NMF's own resources, outstation chapters and other institutions. The students were of the view that NMF was by far the most interesting institution they have come to know about.

We then headed to the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) to participate in a round table discussion on *India and Malaysia in the Regional Geopolitics*. This session was the utmost intense of them all. As we entered the presentation hall, unfamiliar eyes stared our way and it was then we knew we were in for a diplomatic battle. Fear not; even though we were outnumbered but we were trained to fight with diplomacy. After four presentations, two from each country, the battle of questions and answers began. It was so interactive and the students from both

sides were tremendously proactive.

Later that night, we wore our elegant traditional wear and attended a dinner hosted by the High Commissioner of Malaysia to New Delhi, His Excellency Dato' Naimun Ashakli Mohammad. We could not have asked for a more enjoyable time. The homemade delicacies were exquisite while the setting was elegant, which truly made the evening most memorable for us.

The next morning, we were bound for the infamous Taj Mahal in Agra. Despite it being a four-hour journey, nothing beat the sceneries we were able to mentally capture – absolutely mesmerizing. As we entered the compound of Taj Mahal, I personally felt touched and shed a tear or two imagining Shah Jehan's true love for Mumtaz Mahal.

The following day was sadly the last day of our trip and we spent it on a half-day city tour. Among the places we visited were the Lotus Temple, the India Gate and the Parliament of India.

Throughout the four days, we also had



the opportunity to eat as much authentic Indian food as we could and they were truly unforgettable.

I strongly believe that the students had benefitted immensely from the study visit, in terms of expanding their intellectual network, obtaining profound knowledge and living-in-the-moment priceless experience. Moreover, I am of the view that the students were able to display versatility and diplomacy in the conveyance of Malaysian customs and traditions, portraying themselves as potential and capable individuals to represent Malaysia in the future. It is my hope that the collaboration between IDFR and UKM could be enhanced to a higher level for the benefit of the field of diplomacy and international relations. I would also like to personally express my sincere appreciation to those who had made this study visit a reality.

IDFR Welcomes Students from the Virtue Foundation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand

On 29 January 2015, 28 students from the Virtue Foundation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand visited IDFR and the delegation was led by Ms. Chantipha Phutrakul, Director of the Virtue Foundation. The visit was organised in cooperation with the Royal Thai Embassy and the National Department for Culture and Arts, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia.

The main objectives of the visit were to gain knowledge on Malaysian culture and to have a better understanding of the roles and functions of IDFR as well as to obtain an

overview of the ASEAN Community development in Malaysia.

Mr. Syed Bakri Syed Abdul Rahman, the Director of Training, delivered the opening remarks during the briefing session. After a short introduction on IDFR and an ice breaking activity, Mr. Hesmeh Fazree Ahmad Faisal, Assistant Director from the National Department for Culture and Arts, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia, briefed the stu-

dents on Malaysian culture. Each student was also given a bag containing information pertaining to the ASEAN Community and the Malaysian culture. After the briefing, the students enthralled the guests with a delightful cultural performance of songs and dance.



IDFR Welcomes Delegates from the Ethiopian Civil Service University (ECSU)



On 28 January 2015, IDFR hosted delegates from the Ethiopian Civil Service University (ECSU) who were here as part of their visit to various public training institutions in Malaysia to learn the best practices of the respective institutions.

Prior to their visit to IDFR, ECSU visited the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) to learn about the public sector training conducted by them. For training in the field of diplomacy and international relations, ECSU expressed their interest to learn

The delegation comprised five members, led by Dr. Afework Hailemichael Abera, President of ECSU. In his briefing to the IDFR team, Dr. Afework gave a brief description of ECSU and its history.

more from IDFR on its organisation, training courses and other related matters. The session was very interactive where there were a lot of enquiries received from the delegates and also sharing of experience between both parties.

Puan Hajjah Norani Ibrahim, IDFR's Director of Special Projects chaired the session, which was also attended by representatives from all divisions.

Facts on ASEAN and Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2015

ASEAN



The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an inter-governmental association and a home of ten nations (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam). It was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration.

Fundamental Principles of ASEAN

ASEAN Member States have adopted the following fundamental principles, as contained in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia of 1976 as follows:

- 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 the threat or use of force; and
- Effective cooperation among themselves

ASEAN Flag



ASEAN has its own flag and it represents a stable, peaceful, united and dynamic ASEAN. The colours of the Flag – blue, red, white and yellow – represent the main colours of the flags of all the ASEAN Member States. Blue represents peace and stability, red depicts courage and dynamism, white shows purity and yellow symbolises prosperity. The stalks of *padi* in the centre of the emblem represent the dream of ASEAN's Founding Fathers for an ASEAN comprising all the countries in Southeast Asia, bound together in friendship and solidarity. The circle represents the unity of ASEAN.

ASEAN Way

ASEAN Way is a sacred principle of mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of one another and consensus in decision making held

and practised by ASEAN Member States.

ASEAN Charter

The ASEAN Charter serves as a firm foundation in achieving the ASEAN Community by providing legal status and institutional framework for ASEAN. It also codifies ASEAN norms, rules and values; sets clear targets for ASEAN and presents accountability and compliance.

ASEAN Community

The ASEAN Community is a group of Southeast Asian nations that is outward looking and lives in peace, stability and prosperity. Towards this end, ASEAN Member States have embarked on various community building initiatives, programmes and activities. While full integration has yet to happen, ASEAN generally has made significant and visible political, economic and socio-cultural progresses, such as freer movement of peoples, goods and services; open sky policy and the establishment of growth triangles, to name a few.

At the 12th ASEAN Summit in January 2007, the Leaders affirmed their strong commitment to accelerate the establishment of an ASEAN Community from 2010 to 2015. They signed the Cebu Declaration on the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015. In this connection, ASEAN Community will be established on 31 December.

ASEAN Trade Volume

Its trade volume in 2013 was USD 2.3 trillion and that makes ASEAN the seventh largest economy in the world. Its major trading partners are China, Japan and the European Union.

Malaysia's Overall Theme for the Chairmanship

Malaysia aims to steer ASEAN closer to the people, consistent with the central and overarching theme of Malaysia's Chairmanship in 2015, namely, to create a truly *People-Centred ASEAN*.

Malaysia's Main Role as a Chairman of ASEAN in 2015

Malaysia's main roles are two-fold:

- Ensuring the implementation of the action lines as contained in the aforementioned Blueprints and how best to conclude the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community (2009-2015), and
- Developing a Post-2015 Vision for the ASEAN Community which will further chart ASEAN's collective

cause and common destiny.

People-Centred ASEAN

A *People-Centred ASEAN* means ASEAN will be an even more powerful vehicle for the realisation of our people's aspirations – good governance, transparency, higher standards of living, sustainable development, further empowerment of women and greater opportunity for all.

Excerpt from a Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Facts about ASEAN leaflet. For more information, go to www.kln.gov.my or asean2015.gov.my



ASEAN 2015 Workshop for Liaison Officers for the Ministry of International Trade and Industry



officers. The aim was to better prepare them for their duties as liaison officers to the Foreign Minister of each ASEAN member state at the respective meetings.

An integrated teaching and learning methodologies were adopted during the two-day workshop which included briefings, discussions, lectures, simulation exercises and study visits. Among the topics discussed were *Introduction to International and ASEAN Protocol, Personal Grooming and Etiquette, Interpersonal Skills, Cross-Cultural Awareness and Effective Communication Skills*.

On the last day of the workshop, the participants were given the opportunity to practise the duties of a liaison officer during a walkabout and simulation at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. All these exposure will definitely enhance their knowledge as liaison officers.



IDFR organised two series of *Workshop for Liaison Officers for the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI)* and its agencies, among others, Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA), Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) and Small and Medium Enterprise Corporation Malaysia (SME Corp). The first workshop was conducted from 19 to 20 January 2015 with 16 participants while the second one was from 26 to 27 January 2015 with 40 participants.

The objective of the workshop was to equip the participants with the necessary knowledge and capabilities for Malaysia to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship and to organise the 2015 ASEAN Summit and related Meetings. The participants were given hands-on training on issues related to ASEAN, particularly on the roles and functions of Malaysia as the ASEAN Chair.

The participants were taught the roles, functions, responsibilities and key protocol elements of being liaison

ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat



Economic Diplomacy Series 1/2015 *The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC): Making the AEC a Success*





Round Table Discussion on *Recent Security Threats and Freedom of Expression*



Asia Europe Public Diplomacy Training Initiative Workshop



SPKM Pre-Posting Orientation Course for Home-Based Staff and Spouses 1/2015



Workshop on Public Diplomacy and Media Skills



Workshop on Drafting International Resolution





Orientation Course for Rapporteurs in Preparation for ASEAN Chairmanship 2015 Series 1 & 2



ASEAN 2015 Workshop for Liaison Officers, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah



ASEAN 2015 Workshop for Liaison Officers for the Ministry of International Trade and Industry



MTCP: Diplomatic Training Course for International Participants 2015





Visit from the Ethiopian Civil Service University



Study Visit from the Virtue Foundation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand



Orientation Course for Rapporteurs in Preparation for ASEAN Chairmanship 2015



IDFR organised two series of *Orientation Course for Rapporteurs in Preparation for ASEAN Chairmanship 2015* for government officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia. The first series was conducted from 19 to 21 January with 15 participants while the second series was conducted from 11 to 13 February with 20 participants.

The objectives of the course were to equip the participants with the necessary knowledge, skills and capabilities in preparation for Malaysia to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship this year and to organise the ASEAN Summit and other ASEAN related Meetings.

The participants were given interactive lectures and hands-on training on issues related to ASEAN, particularly the roles and functions of the ASEAN Chair. The course was also designed to help them carry out their rapporteur duties efficiently during the Summit and the other meetings.

The participants were given special training on the functions, roles and responsibilities of a rapporteur as well

as key elements of effective writing and listening skills. Other than that, they were briefed on the programme and agenda of related meetings pertaining to the ASEAN Summit and the preparation to carry out the rapporteur duties. Among the topics covered during the course were *The Roles and Functions of Rapporteurs*, *The Rapporteur Format*, *Effective Writing and Listening Skills*, *Technical Familiarisation on The Use of The Digital Voice Recorder* and *Note-Taking Strategies*.

Throughout the three days, an integrated teaching and learning methodologies were adopted.

Say It Right 1/2015

The first English Language course for 2015 was *Say It Right*, held from 9 to 11 February 2015. This course aimed at improving the English pronunciation of civil servants. The course mainly focused on elements of phonetics and phonology and paralinguistic features like tone and pitch of voice, word

stress and the supra-segmental features of the English language, crucial in developing participants' abilities to pronounce English words correctly. The course sought to assist the participants in recognising the English sounds system according to the International Phonetics Alphabet and

the use of appropriate stress patterns and word endings in conversations.

By exposing the participants to the correct intonation patterns of spoken English, it is hoped that they would be able to speak the language with more confidence and have the ability to monitor and self-correct some errors they might make. The participants were from the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs, National News Agency of Malaysia (BERNAMA), Ministry of Education and Department of Occupational, Safety and Health.



Diplomacy and International Relations Module for PTD Cadets (Sidang AB and Sidang CD)

IDFR recently conducted the *Diplomacy and International Relations Module* for two groups of PTD cadets, comprising 61 participants each. The five-day programme was designed

and planned with the collaboration of the Sub Cluster for Human Capital Development, National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN). The first group, *Sidang AB*, was held from

9 to 13 February, while the second group, *Sidang CD*, was conducted from 23 to 27 February.

The objectives of the module were to

provide the participants with the knowledge in the field of diplomacy and international relations, to provide an understanding of the roles and functions of a diplomat and to provide an insight and understanding on Malaysia's experience and perspective on diplomacy and international relations issues.

The module included lectures on *Malaysia's Foreign Policy, Protocol Matters Related to Foreign Service, Roles and Functions of Missions, ASEAN Chairmanship 2015, Consular Matters, Language and Diplomacy, Cross-Cultural Awareness, Dealing with the Media, Understanding Terrorism Threat, Malaysia's Non-Permanent Seat in UNSC 2015-2015, Public Speaking and Presentation Skills* and also a *Sharing Session with a Senior Diplomat*.



The participants were also required to prepare an article review and presentation on the last day of the module. They were evaluated based on their ability to identify the areas of analysis, the originality of their ideas, their enthusiasm, pronunciation and gestures during presentation, as well

as the overall evaluation of their writing and presentation skills.

MTCP: Diplomatic Training Course for International Participants 2015



The course was conducted from 23 February to 13 March 2015. The three-week course was attended by 19 diplomats, from Botswana, Fiji, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Mexico, Myanmar, Tanzania, Togo, Tuvalu, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe and Malaysia.

The course aimed to provide knowledge and diplomatic skills in the conduct of diplomacy and foreign relations among the participants by sharing Malaysia's experience in

managing its foreign policy and international relations. It also aimed to provide them with hands-on experience on areas related to diplomacy and international affairs. The course also served as a platform for networking and exchanging of views among the participants.

During the course, the participants went through an integrated teaching and learning methodology which included briefings, discussions, interactive lectures, simulations and exercises.

Among the modules conducted were *Introduction to Malaysia's Foreign Policy, Current International Relations and Global Issues, Public and Interna-*

tional Law, Applied Psychology in Diplomacy and Language and Diplomacy. The participants were also taken to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia and the Parliament for on-site briefings.

In addition, the participants were introduced to Malaysia's state-level governance when they spent five days in the state of Terengganu. This module aimed to provide further understanding on the mechanism involved in Malaysia's governance system whereby the Federal and State Government play and share equal role and responsibility in developing the nation. The participants were also introduced to the rich history and culture of the state of Terengganu including its early diplomacy. During their stay in Terengganu, they were also taken to Redang Island; Lake Kenyir, the biggest man-made lake in Southeast Asia; Islamic Heritage Centre; Terengganu Museum, the biggest museum in Malay-

sia; and Noor Arfa Batik Craft Complex, a local craft centre.

Based on the feedback received, the participants believed that the course's integrated academic studies and

practical training will contribute to them realising their long-term career goals to emerge as specialised and experienced diplomats. They felt that the modules were relevant to them and they had informative ses-

sions throughout the course that could improve both their theoretical knowledge and practical skills in international relations and diplomacy.

Workshop on Public Diplomacy and Media Skills



IDFR successfully conducted the *Workshop on Public Diplomacy and Media Skills* from 24 to 26 February 2015. The workshop was attended by 19 officials from various ministries and agencies, namely, the Ministry of Education, Prime Minister's Department, Department of Immigration, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malay-

sia, Department of Standards Malaysia, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute, Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government, TV Alhijrah and IDFR.

The aim of this workshop was to equip the participants with the fundamental overview of the objectives and scope of public diplomacy. It was also to enhance their awareness on the importance of public diplomacy in promoting Malaysia's national interests in the international arena. The participants were also taught the knowledge and skills in handling the media in the context of public diplomacy and advocacy.

Among the topics discussed were *An Overview of Public Diplomacy, How to Write an Effective Press Release, Effective Media Relations, Handling Press Conferences, Mock Media Interviews* and *Panel Discussion on the Role of Media in Public Diplomacy*. During the *Mock Media Interview* session, the participants were given the opportunity to experience being in front of the camera and interviewed by reporters. They learned the importance of being fully conversant and having all the relevant information to give accurate and truthful answers.

Overall, this workshop received favourable response from the participants as they gained valuable knowledge, established various skills and built new networking among them.

SPKM: Pre-Posting Orientation Course for Home-Based Staff and Spouses 1/2015

The first series of the pre-posting course was held from 2 to 13 March 2015. The course was attended by 67 officers Grade 41 and above from various ministries and agencies, with their spouses. The spouses were required to attend only the first week of the course.

The objectives of the course were to enhance the participants' knowledge and skills in diplomacy and international relations, to expose them to matters related to working at Malaysian Missions abroad, to prepare them as well as their respective spouses for

their varied functions and duties abroad, and to instil esprit de corps among them for effective performance at Missions.

The participants went through a variety of interactive sessions with professionals from the private sectors, group and experience sharing with those who have served in Missions abroad. The lecture sessions covered topics such as *Preparation for Living and*



Working Abroad, Malaysia's Foreign Policy, Reception and Official Entertaining, Royalty and Palace Protocol, Promoting Malaysia as a Tourist Destination, Ethics and Integrity, Media Skills and Public Diplomacy.

Two new modules were introduced in this series; *Human Trafficking and Religious, Cultural and Consular Matters Related to Death at Missions*. The participants took the opportunity

to interact with the speakers to gain more knowledge on both issues.

Certificates of completion were presented to the participants by the

Director of Training, Tuan Syed Bakri Syed Abd Rahman, on the last day of the programme.

Asia-Europe Public Diplomacy Training Initiative Workshop



IDFR hosted the *Asia-Europe Public Diplomacy Training Initiative Workshop* from 10 to 12 March 2015. The workshop was organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and its collaborators, the DiploFoundation and the National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE) – University of Canterbury, New Zealand. The initiative was funded by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland and ASEF with the support of the European Union (EU). It was attended by 28 diplomats from the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) member countries.

The main objective of the workshop

was to enhance the public diplomacy efforts among countries in Asia and Europe. The focus was on skill-oriented training which was formulated by experts, practitioners and academicians in the field of public diplomacy. IDFR's involvement as the host of the workshop was evidence of its support towards this initiative and Asia-Europe public diplomacy in general.

During the three-day workshop, a wide range of topics were covered including *Public Diplomacy: From Malaysia's Perspectives*, *Asia-Europe Relations*, *The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in Public Diplomacy*, *Introduction to Public Diplomacy*, *Public Diplomacy SWOT Analysis Asia in Europe* and *Europe in Asia*, *E-diplomacy*, *Cross-Cultural Understanding and its Implications on Public Diplomacy*, *Working with the Media* and *Public Diplomacy Strategy Exercise*.

The participants were engaged in simulation processes, hands-on exercises, group work and discussions, and debates on various issues related to public diplomacy. These were facilitated by a group of speakers from various organisations from Asia and Europe. The training gave the participants a chance to gain insights from practitioners of public diplomacy and experienced diplomats on their involvement in enhancing public diplomacy efforts among ASEM members.

The workshop ended with a high-tea reception hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia. Mr. Syed Bakri Syed Abd Rahman, IDFR's Director of Training delivered the closing speech to mark the end of the workshop.

Workshop on Drafting International Resolution

The workshop was conducted on 4 and 5 March 2015 at Pacific Regency Hotel Suites, Kuala Lumpur. It was attended by 16 researchers from Parliament Malaysia.

The two-day workshop was requested by Parliament Malaysia with the main aim of providing understanding to the participants on the aspects and elements in preparing and drafting

international resolutions. This is to equip them with relevant knowledge, skills and information related to drafting resolutions as they would have to prepare drafts when they represent the country internationally.

The workshop was divided into three main modules, namely, *Aspects and Elements in Drafting International Resolutions* conducted by Tan Sri

Hasmy Agam, Chairman of Human Rights Commission, Malaysia (SUHAKAM); *Legal Matters Related to Drafting Resolutions*, conducted by Dr. Intan Murnira Ramli, Director of Advisory Project, Judicial and Legal Training Institute (ILKAP); and *Sharing of Experience Session* by Dato' Hussin Nayan, Director General of IDFR.

All three speakers have in-depth and profound experience, skills and knowledge in drafting international resolutions. They took the participants through a series of interactive lectures, group work and discussions, and simulation exercises. Some examples of international resolutions which have

been adopted were given to the participants to clarify the techniques, styles, format and language used. Exercises and examples given were on issues related to international relations, politics and economy.



ASEAN 2015 Workshop for Liaison Officers, Kota Kinabalu Sabah



Malaysia assumed the chairmanship of ASEAN beginning 1 January 2015. The ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat held at Sutera Harbour Resort, Kota Kinabalu from 27 to 28 January, was the first series of ASEAN meetings under the auspicious of Malaysia as the ASEAN chair for 2015.

Further to this, on Friday, 23 January 2015, 54 participants from various ministries and government agencies in Sabah attended a day-long session in the best of spirit to better prepare for their liaison duties during the retreat. The second series comprised 27 officers, 11 personal security officers and 16 drivers.

Madam Rahimah Yeop, Director of Academic Studies, Research and

and post ASEAN meetings.

She also shared the importance of interpersonal skills and cross-cultural communication and how they influence the duties of liaison officers. She further explained that in dealing with VIPs, everything should be expressed clearly and in an appropriate manner in order to achieve the desired result.

The second session was on *Communication in English* by Ms. Wan Faizah Wan Yusoff, the Acting Director of the Language Division. The session focused on building the participants' basic conversational skills through interactive simulations of Liaison Officers' duties. She gave some helpful tips on key phrases pertaining

to greetings as well as the do's and don'ts when communicating with VIPs.

A significant aspect to the module was a simulation exercise based on a scenario at an ASEAN meeting. In groups of four, the participants were asked to come up with a dialogue on a simulated ASEAN Summit/meeting using the speaking tips provided.

Dato' Nazri Yusof, Deputy Chief of Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Syed Farizal Aminy Syed Mohamad, Principal Assistant Secretary of Protocol Division closed the workshop with a briefing on the 2015 ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat and its related meetings. The briefing was given to enable the participants to have a better understanding of the retreat's programme and agenda. The briefing ended with participants asking for further clarification on the facilities, programme and logistical arrangements for the respective Foreign Ministers and spouses under their purview.



Special Address by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad on Reflections on Malaysia-Cuba Relations

On 9 February 2015, two IDFR officers; Ms. Zanariah Abdul Malek, Deputy Director of Academic Studies,

Research and Publication Division and Ms. Lim Hui Chin from the Office of the Director General attended a special

address by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad on *Reflections on Malaysia-Cuba Relations* at the IKMAS High Level

Public Lecture held in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of bilateral relations between Cuba and Malaysia. The event was held at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Organised by the Centre for Latin American Studies (iKAL) of IKMAS UKM in collaboration with the Embassy of Cuba in Malaysia, the public lecture brought together members of the diplomatic corps, government officers, academicians, researchers, students and journalists.

Malaysia-Cuba diplomatic relations was established on 6 February 1975. Subsequently, Cuba opened its embassy in Kuala Lumpur in 1997 while Malaysia opened its Representative Office in Havana in 2001. Noting the importance of strategic interests between Malaysia and Cuba, or rather Latin America as a whole, Professor Datuk Dr. Noor Azlan Ghazali, Vice Chancellor of UKM in his welcoming remarks stated that UKM has so far signed five Memorandum of Understanding with Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Ecuador and Cuba respectively for the purposes of facilitating collaborative educational arrangements between the university and its counterparts to study the latest developments in the political, security, economic, social and cultural spheres of both regions. With the signing of the MoU with Cuba, UKM has had student and scholar exchange with its Cuban counterpart.

While recounting the visit of Mr. Fidel Castro, former Prime Minister and President of Cuba to Malaysia as well as our former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir's visits to Cuba during their tenure, H.E. Ruben Perez Valdez, Ambassador of Cuba to Malaysia, in his welcoming address expressed hope that our current Prime Minister would also visit Cuba. H.E. Valdez further stated that the top priority of the Embassy of Cuba in Malaysia is to establish people-to-people relations between Cuba and Malaysia. With regard to Malaysia-Cuba relations, he maintained that different political systems have not hindered good

relations between the two countries due to mutual respect and goodwill.

In his special address, Tun Dr. Mahathir said that the main reason our respective embassies were set up very much later after the establishment of diplomatic relations was because Malaysia adopted a pro-Western foreign policy immediately after independence. He added that Malaysia was part of the British Empire – the empire on which the sun never sets and thus we knew only Commonwealth countries and did not look much at other countries. As a result, we knew very little about the People's Republic of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and many other countries in the world. At the same time, the then Malaya disliked communist ideology and was worried about the spread of communism into the country and thus, we distanced ourselves with the Communist countries, including Cuba. Adding that our first Prime Minister was eurocentric, he said it was natural as the late Tunku studied in England.

Nonetheless, during our second Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak's tenure, he decided that Malaysia should widen its relations with countries other than the Commonwealth, including Communist countries such as the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, and thus the self-explanatory establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba 40 years ago. In this regard, Tun Dr. Mahathir opined that the establishment of Malaysia-Cuba relations then was merely a formality as we knew very little about Cuba and vice versa. He said as far as he could recollect, the late Tun Abdul Razak did not visit Cuba but the late Tun Hussein Onn, our third Prime Minister, did.

Tun Dr. Mahathir continued by saying that during his tenure as fourth Prime Minister, there was a list of priorities for his foreign policy orientation. At the top of his list was ASEAN countries, followed by small countries, Islamic countries and, finally, the British Com-

monwealth. The rationale behind his priorities with regard to his foreign policy orientation was explained during the question and answer session.

Tun Dr. Mahathir also emphasised that as a trading nation, Malaysia should continue to explore new markets and the Latin American countries is a case in point. This explained his 1991 delegation to Latin American countries; Republic of Chile, the Argentine Republic, the Federative Republic of Brazil and Cuba. He said that the Cubans were "normal people" like Malaysians and quite friendly. Thus he did not see why Malaysia should not establish relations with Cuba. He also mentioned that he likes the Cuban Havana ice-cream very much and had tried to introduce the ice-cream to Malaysia but without success. He added that he had also tried to increase trade relations with Cuba during his tenure.

Acknowledging the challenges of the sanctions imposed by its northern neighbour, Tun Dr. Mahathir commended Cuba for being able to withstand its sternest test through all the years while still maintaining its political system and ideology. He was glad that the U.S. President Barack Obama is now willing to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba though laden with a stumbling block – the human rights record in Cuba. In this regard, he asserted that the US' human rights record is not that good either. It practises torture, for instance, according to some American reports. When saying this, he reiterated that he is not anti-American. He admitted that his human rights record was also bad but the US' is even worse. Thus, he underscored that one should not teach others how to run their country. If this is practised, we will have a peaceful world. He congratulated Cuba once again for being able to stand tall and not submitting to pressure forced upon it. With regard to Malaysia's approach to Cuba, Tun Dr. Mahathir said Malaysia has a policy of non-intervention into the internal/domestic affairs of other countries.

In conclusion, he opined that at university level, both countries' relations could focus more on

research work and he believed that both countries could certainly learn something useful from each other.

Language and Cultural Diplomacy Centre

By Jeanette Daina Chen

Under IDFR's transformation programme which will kick start sometime this year, the Language Division will be known as the Language and Cultural Diplomacy Centre.

The programme which will involve everyone at IDFR will start with the Language Division. The main objective is to widen the role and the scope of the division, to include more cultural activities as well as research, with special emphasis on language for specific purposes and in particular diplomacy, the core business of the Institute.

Because learning a language is only the first step towards understanding the peoples of the world, the various civilisations and cultures, the introduction of culture is indeed essential. You may be able to communicate, speak a language perfectly and understand and translate a word accurately but may not grasp the exact meaning, unless you put it into context and open your mind to another way of thinking. Failing to consider the context, the customs and the history of the country can lead to aggravation and serious misunderstandings.

Besides, the same word can change meaning, according to the country, even if you are using the same language. Moreover, even the same word might change meaning according to the intonation, the expression and the circumstances. So, there is an obvious need not only to master the language but also to understand the culture, although this may not avoid all misunderstandings. Each individual has his or her own views and ways to handle situations, and no matter how competent you may be in these areas,

you might still meet the odd person who will never compromise and firmly refuse to see things from any other angle, in which case, advanced psychological and diplomatic strategies are needed.

Occasionally, even prominent columnists in leading national newspapers seem to accidentally misinterpret certain words or concepts in a way that could be confusing for the public. Unless the readers are knowledgeable and check information, they could be misled by such statements and might form the wrong opinion on a topic of importance. This further highlights the importance of language, culture and especially research, for us to make sense of world events, to have an independent opinion, think objectively and express ourselves clearly.

An accidental slip of the tongue can also happen to the most competent speakers and we often laugh at some awkward utterance by a famous international star or politician. Although we find it hilarious, it can sometimes lead to a lot of undeserved bashing and long lasting grudges, with unfortunate consequences.

All this clearly illustrates how difficult and tricky communication can be at times. Conveying precise information definitely requires a lot of skill, especially in the area of diplomacy where sensitive issues are abundant.

So the new orientation of the centre will help us fulfill our objective to provide better service to a wider audience through an increased efficiency and competency, in order to be ready to face the challenges of globalisation, to benchmark the Institute and en-

hance its image. The introduction of research will also have a significant impact and will ensure that we keep abreast of changes and new trends in our field of expertise, in our continuous quest for excellence.

At the beginning of 2015, IDFR welcomed the new intakes of English, Bahasa Malaysia and foreign language courses, namely, French, Spanish and Arabic. With the new perspective, our course participants can look forward to participating in a wider range of cultural activities.

In March, the French language participants enjoyed the French Language Week in Malaysia, which gave them a great opportunity to put into practice their language skills while enjoying interesting cultural activities, and meeting people from the various member countries of the "Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie" (French Speaking International Organization).

We take this opportunity to thank the Linguistic and Cultural Department of the Embassy of France as well as the Alliance Française in Kuala Lumpur, for welcoming our participants to their cultural events. We appreciate their continuous and valuable support in the teaching of the French Language. We would also like to thank all the Spanish speaking Missions who provide exciting activities and bring their culture to Malaysia, with the anticipated Spanish Art Festival and the vibrant yearly Latin American Festival.

Insights into other cultures open new horizons, contribute to a more comprehensive language learning and to a

better understanding of the world around us. They are a humble contri-

bution to world peace, which is the ultimate purpose of diplomacy.

Third Culture Kid

By Sahrul Nizam Nordin

Introduction

Sitting in the terminal at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), looking out the window with a view of the 747 Malaysian Airlines, the feeling of excitement and anxiety struck me. That was my first time being inside KLIA and it was going to be my first time travelling outside of Malaysia, to a country I know very little about. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia had given my father an opportunity to showcase his ability as a representative of Malaysia in Bucharest, Romania. It was an opportunity, a situation and an event that changed not only his life but mine as well. It marked the beginning of my life as a “Third Culture Kid,” the son of a diplomat.

Romania

As we arrived at Bucharest International Airport, it seemed so unreal to be surrounded by people with such different physical features who spoke in a language I have never heard before. It felt strange to be in this situation at the age of five, to breathe in a different climate and to feel the cold air slicing through my skin.

Romania was my first time for almost everything; it was the first time I experienced the four seasons: my first time having to deal with a different currency, my first time being in a school filled with International students, and my first time being exposed to people of different cultures, religions and ethnicities.

Throughout our four years in Romania, my family and I took various road trips. We drove to Hungary, Austria and Czech Republic, and were greeted by other Malaysian diplomats, who wel-



comed us into their homes. These countries had much more to offer than Romania, as their infrastructures were well built and preserved, well reconstructed and renovated, and the people were more modern – in simpler terms, they were more developed.

There were only four Malaysian families at that time, and with this small number, we regularly made our way to the Romanian country side together. Driving through the two-lane highways, you could see kilometres after kilometres of sunflower plantations, with valleys and small mountains standing in the background.

Our activities revolved around the four seasons. During summer, we drove to the coast to swim in the Black Sea. In winter, we made our way up the snowy mountains to ice skate and sled. In autumn, we took photos in parks with the different shades of colours on trees and in spring, we saw flowers bloom again.

The United States of America

In our last year in Romania, a new post opened up in Washington D.C. Without any hesitation, my father accepted the posting and within a few weeks, we managed to pack all our belongings, made a brief visit back to Malaysia before flying to Washington D.C.

The beginning of our time in that country was not what my family and I had imagined. The tragic event of September 11 occurred while we were still living in a serviced-apartment in Northern Virginia. Waking up that morning and seeing the World Trade Centre in flames was unforgettable and devastating, especially when both towers collapsed and ashes showered the rest of New York City.

The Malaysian community in Washington D.C. was much larger than in Romania. Even though officers and staff were primarily from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, there were other government and government-related agencies such as the Prime Minister’s Department, Majlis Amanah Rakyat, Petronas and Bank Negara, just to name a few. The families grew fond of one another, creating close relationships between them.

In the month of Ramadan, there was a system in which families would choose the date when they would like to host *Terawih* prayers. Therefore, instead of praying in mosques, we prayed in one home each evening. On the first day of *Hari Raya*, everyone would make their way to the embassy. The prayer was held in the auditorium, large enough to fit everyone in. Families would have open houses, making us feel closer to home.

Annual bowling, karaoke and golf tournaments were organised between the Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York and the Malaysian Embassy. The two Missions would take turn organising the tournaments which were opened to all members of the Malaysian community and has now become a tradition.

Most of the Malaysians then lived in Northern Virginia. Only a few, including the Ambassador, lived in Washington D.C. Since America is an English speaking country, Malaysian children were not required to attend international school. Instead, we were all admitted to public schools. However, since the majority of students in public schools are Americans, they were not as exposed to international surroundings and backgrounds.

My preferences also changed in terms of music and sports. I started to gain interest in American football and basketball and even referred to football as soccer. I was in a state of Americanization.

Ukraine

When my father was posted to Ukraine, none of my family members including myself, wanted to go. It was primarily because we were tired of moving. I was 14 and all I wanted was stability; all I wanted was to be home.

My life in Ukraine started out rugged. Most of the people there did not understand or speak English. They spoke Russian and/or Ukrainian. Most of them were not exposed to having minorities around. They inherited a sense of nationalism, a pride of their own kind, making them hesitant to accept foreigners. Skinheads and other Neo-Nazi-like groups existed, and were known for their hatred of Jews, Asians and other minorities.

We were welcomed warmly by the Malaysian families there, in particular

by Ambassador Aminahtun and her family. My first friend there was her son and he helped introduce his friends, my future schoolmates, to me.

I began and finished my high school education in Ukraine, at Kyiv International School. Since the high school consisted less than a hundred students then, everyone knew one another. There were no cliques like in American schools; everyone was accepting of each other's cultures and beliefs, and was friendly with one another. It was not hard to adapt to the surroundings, especially when sports programmes were offered, which I made good use of. By becoming a soccer, basketball and volleyball player, I continued travelling to different parts of Eastern Europe such as Moscow, Bratislava, Warsaw and Belgrade, as well as to a Scandinavian country, Finland.

Even though we held immunity, it was not a safe place for foreigners. As mentioned earlier, Neo-Nazi groups existed. The Ukrainian Government could not control this issue because these groups were so-called "nationalists." The American Secret Service advised the diplomatic communities to stay away from alley ways, and avoid walking alone in the middle of the night. These Neo-Nazis not only will attack you; they will kill you as well. As a result, the first few years there, we did not leave our homes at night, for fear of racist attacks. Today, however, Ukrainians have slowly eliminated this ideology of racism and are now more welcoming towards foreigners. More and more are learning

the English language, making communication less stressful.

Conclusion

Part of the problem of being a "Third Culture Kid" is we do not know where our real home is. For us, the places we lived in were our homes. It might be a fun experience to travel around and live in different countries, yet little do people know how tiring it can be.

As children of diplomats, one of our main worries and concerns is losing our mother tongue. My first language is English and my second is Malay. Since I lived overseas from the age of 5 to 18, it is difficult for me to understand some Malay terms and phrases. I have adopted the "American" thinking with the Malay beliefs. This mix of culture is what makes us unique in a way; our views are considered to be more moderate than others and our way of thinking are different too. Our duty was to live our everyday life like any other ordinary child. Even though we were given certain luxuries such as travelling in business class and holding diplomatic immunity, it was important for us to know where we stand.

Furthermore, we not only have to adapt to new surroundings but make sacrifices as well. At a young age, it was not an easy process to say goodbye to our friends and go off to another country and make new friends. Even though I experienced this cycle three times, each time was still very challenging.

A Diplomat who Always Stood Tall

By Dr. Pola Singh

17 December 1996 is a date which will forever be etched in the mind of the late Datuk Ahmad Mokhtar Selat. It was on this day that he was held hostage with many others at the Japanese Embassy residence in Lima, Peru.

It took another 12 agonising days of negotiation by the Fujimori Government before the Tupac Amaru rebels finally released him. And it was none other than Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (now Tun, then the Foreign

Minister) who accompanied him back to Kuala Lumpur to a hero's welcome!

Just two months before the incident, Mokhtar left for Lima to set up and helm the Malaysian Embassy in Peru.



I am tough with people, and I am tough with myself. There are no double standards ~ Datuk Ahmad Mokhtar Selat.

“It was a very traumatic experience. I feel that I have been given a new lease of life; now I do not take life for granted anymore,” Mokhtar said after his release.

Despite being given the opportunity to be reassigned elsewhere, he was adamant to carry out the duties for which he had been assigned. So he returned to continue to serve as Malaysian Ambassador to Peru.

“Many mistake a diplomat’s life for a very glamorous one,” he said. “But they fail to see the not-so-glamorous side: we are ideal targets for kidnapping and terrorist activities.”

Life can also be very stressful for the family as frequent change of postings means never-ending adjustments to a new environment (climate, language, food, culture, schools) and making new friends.

Even so, Mokhtar said he would not trade his profession for anything else in the world. Wherever he was posted, he had found immense satisfaction in serving his country.

I was fortunate enough to work under Mokhtar at the ASEAN Secretariat where he held the post of Deputy Secretary-General. He did his best to infuse the best traditions and best practices of the Malaysian civil service into the secretariat. His rich experience gained from his various postings including India, Korea, New York, In-

onesia, Kuwait, Venezuela and Peru also helped. His vast experience in the Malaysian administrative and diplomatic service served him well in all these postings.

Mokhtar left behind a legacy at the ASEAN Secretariat which was difficult to emulate. He introduced a series of cost-saving measures that optimised the use of the secretariat’s limited resources.

Mokhtar said, “To me, leaving the ASEAN Secretariat equipped with the capacity to do more with less gives me the most satisfying feeling. After all, we have the best brains from the ten member countries and with a bit of tweaking (reorganisation) here and there, we should be able to harness our full potential.”

Mokhtar led by example. Although he was not required to clock in and out, he insisted on being treated like the rest. With a little bit of help from technology, he introduced a new punch clock system which was not open to abuse; the high-tech punch clock only recognised the staff member’s thumbprint.

He made no apologies for his tough stand on matters close to his heart: integrity and a strong sense of accountability. He said, “I am tough with people, and I am tough with myself. There are no double standards here”.

His no-nonsense approach certainly won him many admirers and grudging respect too from his few critics.

His personal brush with terrorists in Peru made him uniquely qualified to coordinate joint counter-terrorism measures among ASEAN member countries, especially in stamping out terrorism and denying sanctuary to terrorists on the run.

According to Mokhtar, “Instead of brute force, a holistic approach involving the battle of the hearts and minds is needed to fight the scourge.” Besides coordinating the battle against terrorism, Mokhtar was also deeply involved in coordinating efforts among ASEAN member countries against transnational crimes, such as drug trafficking, trafficking of women and children, and money laundering.

Mokhtar certainly left his mark as the driving force in bringing about significant changes to the ASEAN Secretariat.

Mokhtar stood tall whatever the occasion. His trim figure, immaculate dressing, impeccable manners and sharp wit set him apart from the rest; truly a fine and distinguished diplomat.

This *kampung* boy was proud to be the product of Sekolah Tuanku Muhammad, Kuala Pilah. After completing his Form Six at King George V, Seremban, he pursued his tertiary education at Universiti Malaya. He later went on to join the Australian National University to earn his Masters Degree in International Relations.

To unwind after a hard day’s work, Mokhtar wrote a book on his experience as a hostage in Peru and intended to write his memoirs. His other pleasures in life included a passion for art – collecting paintings, sculptures and native hand-woven textiles, just to name a few.

He extolled such humility and grace. We will miss him deeply.

This article is a tribute to the late Datuk Ahmad Mokhtar Selat who passed away on 21 January 2015 and is an edited version of the one published in The Star on 23 January 2015.

Photo credit – Dr. Pola Singh. Photo taken at the ASEAN Secretariat office in Jakarta.

Continued from page 6

policymaker engagement and improve the quality of reporting on ASEAN matters, building stronger communications and well-functioning instruments of public relations purposes.

Adequate Balance of Nationalities

As with any large organisation, there are bound to be flaws, and one glaring weakness within the ASEAN Secretariat is the disproportionate representation of nationalities hired. Given that out of the 300 hired staff, a fraction of those are in fact open to citizens of member states termed openly recruited staff (ORS), while the three highest positions are elected by governments on a rotation basis¹⁰. One rationale is that the hiring process for technical positions can be done within Indonesia itself. This is definitely a cost-saving measure which is praiseworthy as ORS candidates are often flown in for interviews and are entitled to expatriate benefits¹¹ upon recruitment. However, what it creates are two challenges. The first is a lopsided workforce in terms of nationalities when ideally the Secretariat should be made up of equal representation of nationalities. Secondly, it makes promotions of local staff and hiring regional staff challenging. Local staff who have served ASEC know the system well and will always ace interviews that are open to ASEAN citizens, therefore giving locally recruited technical staff the vantage point when applying for ORS posi-

tions. However, not every local hire can be promoted into a regional hire position as there are more technical staff positions than there are positions to fill at the ORS level.

Do local hires then stay stuck in their positions until retirement, or do all qualified local hires get promoted contributing to the majority-minority situation within the Secretariat? Yet, long serving staff acquire technical knowledge which converts into institutional memory that in turn greatly benefits an organisation like the ASEAN Secretariat. It is a sensitive issue but a shift in the recruitment system is necessary to ensure more ORS positions are truly as its name suggests – openly recruited positions.

Another point to consider is what happens to ORS recruits after their tenure with ASEC? It has been noted that other ASEAN member states rally and canvas for their countrymen in the recruitment process. There is a solidarity built that Malaysia has not caught up to. One way to do so is to tap into the expertise of Malaysians currently serving at the ASEAN Secretariat and those who are leaving. This group of people have been privileged with valuable perspective, skills, know-how, networks and contacts which can benefit local agencies and ministries particularly in strategic planning and training.

Malaysia's ASEAN Chair Legacy – A Succession Plan Roadmap

The call to strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat is far from new and sounds almost like a broken record. As an organisation almost reaching middle age by human years and moving into the next phase of a post 2015 agenda, it is time for a stronger, more empowered ASEAN Secretariat.

Malaysia as the 2015 ASEAN Chair is strategically positioned to develop a succession plan for the ASEAN Secretariat. As the saying goes 'leave things better than you found them' and in that vein, Malaysia should lead the restructuring process.

Perhaps the meaningful legacy of this Chairmanship should be to develop a comprehensive ASEC succession plan roadmap that ensures ASEAN is supported as it continues to lead transformational change within the region.



Natalie is currently an independent researcher and consultant having been the Senior Officer Social Welfare, Women, Labour and Migrant Workers Division in the Socio-Cultural Cooperation Directorate of the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia. Prior to which Natalie was a Senior Analyst with the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia, the country's premier, autonomous and non-profit think-tank. She is also a columnist with theSun, a Malaysian daily and has over 200 articles published under her column On Pointe. She was bestowed the Pingat Pekerti Terpilih (Medal of Great Achievement) for her service to the Malaysian Royal Family and received the Merit Service Award for her work with ISIS Malaysia. Natalie is a Chevening Scholar with a Masters in International Studies and Diplomacy from the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London). She has completed the taught section of the Masters in Strategy and Defence Studies from University Malaya, Malaysia and holds a BA in Sociology from Massey University, New Zealand. Natalie can be contacted at natalieambrose@gmail.com

¹ Article written by Natalie Shobana Ambrose at the request of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations Malaysia for 'Diplomatic Voice'

² Laos (2016), Myanmar (2014) and Malaysia (2015) swapped their terms as ASEAN Chair. In 2011, Indonesia requested for a swap of ASEAN Chairmanship with Brunei Darussalam.

³ Timor Leste applied to join ASEAN as its 11th Member in March 2011.

⁴ It was first housed at the Department of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia in Jakarta. The existing ASEAN Secretariat at 70A Jalan Sisingamangaraja, Jakarta, was established and officiated in 1981 by the then President of Indonesia, H.E. Soeharto.

⁵ EU is a larger grouping, made up of more developed nations and has a very different mandate.

⁶ China is Asia's fastest growing economy.

⁷ The ASEAN Secretariat's vision is that by 2015, it will be the nerve centre of a strong and confident ASEAN Community that is globally respected for acting in full compliance with its Charter and in the best interest of its people.

⁸ "Asian Development Bank." *Asian Development Bank*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 April 2015. <<http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/page/42062/adb-hq-salary-structure.pdf>>

⁹ (1) Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Indonesia (2) the Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS) Thailand, (3) the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies (ISDS) Philippines, (4) the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia and (5) the Singapore Institute for International Affairs (SIIA). (6) Brunei Darussalam Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (BDIPSS), (7) Laos's Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), (8) the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV), (9) the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) and (10) the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS).

¹⁰ There are four ASEAN Vice Secretaries General. Two of them are elected according to the principle of rotation. The two remaining will be elected on the basis of competition among candidates from all member states, but based on the principle that they have to come from different countries. And the country that has its representative holding the ASEAN Secretary General, that country will not have a Deputy Secretary General.

¹¹ Relocation assistance, housing, insurance etc.

What They Say...



Dr. Pawel Krupka
First Counsellor,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland
(Participant of *Asia-Europe
Public Diplomacy Training Initiative*)

I found it a precious initiative and a very useful personal experience. An exchange of views on public diplomacy between people of different cultural traditions helped a lot to achieve a broader and deeper approach to this particular branch of our profession. The confrontation of approaches towards public diplomacy based on different cultures and societies was the main strength of the workshop. It would be even better if there were more lecturers from Southeast Asia. It was my first visit to Malaysia. I found it familiar in terms of lifestyle. A traditional culture based on the relation between man and nature is still present even in the big capital city. I wish you to keep this way of life as long as possible.

It was a very enriching and thought-provoking workshop. I particularly enjoyed the session on *E-diplomacy* which provided me with a range of new insights and concrete ideas for my work at EEAS. The three days were packed with information but nevertheless, left room for many private debates among the participants. The mix of participants from Asia and Europe and the richness they brought to the debate were the strengths of the workshop. The speakers and trainers were simply excellent; you leave the workshop with a much better understanding of EU-Asia relations and how they influence public diplomacy initiatives between the two regions. It was my second time visiting Malaysia but the hospitality of Malaysians has never ceased to amaze me – a beautiful place with exceptionally good food and, above all, extraordinarily nice people. They have made the workshop a most memorable and highly pleasant experience.



Bernd Spanier
Head of Sector HRVP Mogherini
Correspondence,
European External Action Service (EEAS)
Germany/United Kingdom
(Participant of *Asia-Europe Public
Diplomacy Training Initiative*)



Jorge Armando Rascon Garcia
Head of Economic Affairs,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico
(Participant of *MTCP: Diplomatic Training
Course for International Participants 2015*)

It was a very good and comprehensive programme, with an interdisciplinary approach. It not only provided good training and tools for everyday affairs but also many insights into Malaysia's foreign policy. The benefit gained from the course was the good network-building with participants from Malaysia as well as other countries. It was my fourth time in Malaysia and I love it! I love the fact that the country is cosmopolitan with the different races and cultures living in harmony.

Francais est en effet un langage pratique (French is indeed a practical language). As an English language academician, I would advocate that all English learners master French too. One out of three words in English was borrowed from French. Knowing French enriches language usage in English in the many domains of our everyday life, be it in the legal, political or architectural sectors. Knowledge of the language has initiated a paradigm shift in my life, especially during my sojourns overseas. In France, I put into practice the French that I have learned.



Chan Mary
Education Officer,
Ministry of Education of Malaysia
(Participant of *French Level I*)

Upcoming Courses/Events at IDFR^{*}

<i>Pre-Posting Orientation Course for Home-Based Staff and Spouses under Sistem Pentadbiran Kerajaan Malaysia di Luar Negara (SPKM) 2/2015 (Grade 38 and below)</i>	6-10 April 2015
<i>MTCP: Workshop on Diplomacy and Security for ASEAN Mid-Level Career Diplomats 2015</i>	8-21 April 2015
<i>Building Blocks of Good English</i>	13-17 April 2015
<i>IDFR Lecture Series 2/2015: Malaysia's Role and Agenda in the UN Security Council (UNSC)</i>	15 April 2015
<i>ASEAN Ambassador Lecture Series 1/2015 Malaysia-Indonesia Relations under the Jokowi Administration and Its Impact for the Region</i>	7 May 2015
<i>Effective Writing Skills 1/2015</i>	5 May-8 May 2015
<i>Spanish Level II</i>	5 May-27 August 2015
<i>Pre-Posting Orientation Course for Home-Based Staff and Spouses under Sistem Pentadbiran Kerajaan Malaysia di Luar Negara (SPKM) 3/2015 (Grade 41 and above)</i>	11-22 May 2015
<i>MTCP: English Language Course for Diplomacy 2015</i>	20 May-2 June 2015
<i>IDFR-UKM-AUN AEC Forum</i>	21-22 May 2015
<i>ASEAN Ambassador Lecture Series 2/2015: ASEAN and the Regional Architecture</i>	27 May 2015
<i>Panel Discussion on The Maritime Silk Road Belt and Its Implications in the Region</i>	11 June 2015
<i>Pre-Posting Orientation Course for Home-Based Staff and Spouses under Sistem Pentadbiran Kerajaan Malaysia di Luar Negara (SPKM) 4/2015 (Grade 38 and below)</i>	8-12 June 2015
<i>Workshop on Communicating Across Cultures</i>	9-11 June 2015

* Subject to changes

Best Wishes

To our new colleague who recently joined the IDFR family

Norfatimah Othman

To our colleague who recently had a 'visit from the stork'

Azmah Mahmud

To our colleagues who left us with pleasant memories

Major (Rtd.) Mohd Ridzuan Hj. Mohd Shariff - end of contract
 Rabeha Mohamed - transferred to Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Malaysia

To our colleagues who recently took the vows of matrimony

Gunaselvan a/l Vail

Ida Rosyanti Ishak

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