

# DIPLOMATIC VOICE

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

ISSN 2289-1277

## Cultural Appreciation Day 2017



On 22 August 2017, IDFR once again organised a Cultural Appreciation Day (CAD), an event which aims to promote multiculturalism and cultural diplomacy. It was the second one after the inaugural event was held on 28 July last year. This year saw the afternoon of merriment officiated by Dato' Sri Reezal Merican Naina Merican, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Cultural exhibitions and performan-

ces as well as food samplings were among the activities at this year's CAD. The participants included those from the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP); Strategic Analysis Course for International Participants; the Diplomatic Training Course for Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS); and the Diploma in Diplomacy (DiD), the three programmes taking place at the Institute then. Other participants included the

ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat, Istana Budaya and Kraftangan Malaysia.

As part of their showcase, the Strategic Analysis Course participants – from Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Fiji, Georgia, Kenya, Laos, Mauritania, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Uzbekistan and Vietnam – donned their traditional costumes and displayed cultural accoutrements

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## Datuk Mohamad Sadik Kethergany

Director General, Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations

### 1. As the Director General of IDFR and a senior official of the Ministry, can you share with us your view on the development of Malaysia's foreign policy?

The Federation of Malaya became a member of the United Nations on 17 September 1957 and six years later as a nation, Malaysia took its seat at the world's august body on 17 September 1963. There has not been any dramatic shift in the fundamental principles of our foreign policy ever since then. We adopt an independent and principled position in our international relations posture, uphold the sanctity of international law and treaties to which we subscribe to, staying away from interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and maintaining friendly relations with all countries. The above notwithstanding, our foreign policy is not cast in stone. It evolves with time and the dynamics of geopolitics around the world. We cooperate closely with other members of the United Nations on global issues which are multifaceted and increasingly complex. Cognizant of the fact that states are no longer the exclusive determinants of global peace and security, Malaysia also engages with non-state actors. Malaysia acknowledges these dynamics and gladly cooperates with stakeholders in the international and regional fora towards addressing issues of mutual concern for a better world. Malaysia plays a proactive role in ensuring a peaceful and progressive region with close engagement with our neighbours in ASEAN. Our constructive participation in various international organisations such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), East Asia Summit (EAS), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and in the United Nations (UN) in dealing with contemporary issues of international concerns including counter-terrorism, illegal migration, ethnic cleansing, climate change,

non-traditional security threats and overlapping claims are lauded.

The Ministry has since expanded its establishment to cope with this growing dynamics including the Bilateral Affairs Department, Multi-lateral Affairs Department, ASEAN Malaysia National Secretariat (AMNS), Department of Policy Planning and Coordination, Department of Maritime Affairs, Protocol and Consular Division, South East Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism (SEARCCT), National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention, Legal Division, Integrity Unit, Department of Management Services, and IDFR.

### 2. As the Ministry's training arm, how can IDFR's role be enhanced to contribute further to the formulation and implementation of Malaysia's foreign policy?

Since its inception in 1991, IDFR has played a leading role in equipping our diplomats with the necessary skills to better serve our country abroad and contribute meaningfully in the process of ensuring a more peaceful and secured world order. We regularly revise our training curriculum and course contents to suit the contemporary needs of our diplomatic engagement and foreign relations. Over the years, IDFR has made great stride and for this, merits should go to my predecessors and colleagues at the Ministry for their invaluable contributions in charting the roadmap and setting the high standards.

In 2016, IDFR embarked on a new journey to becoming a premier training and research institution in diplomacy and international relations. It is currently still in the early phase of its transformation exercise as it endeavours to become a think tank that will not only continue to serve as the training ground for our young diplomats but also

to play an equally important advisory role to the Ministry. The transformation exercise is envisaged to assist the Ministry and ensure that it will always be au fait and well prepared to face the challenges and dynamics of inter-state relations and able to effectively deal with the intricacies of global issues today.

In preparation for this, IDFR has, since the first quarter of 2017, engaged research officers of varying academic background to undertake research work in various key current issues of direct relevance and pertinence to the Ministry. We are on the right track despite some challenging constraints of softwares and hardwares. It is still early days and these challenges should not distract us from producing our own in-house subject matter experts and play an advisory role to the Ministry.

### 3. You have served the Ministry for more than 28 years. In your opinion, what are some of the key traits in becoming a skilled and well-rounded Malaysian diplomat?

The intricacies of diplomacy are difficult to gauge, hence there is no single recipe to becoming a successful diplomat. More so a diplomat's roles and responsibilities vary greatly. However there are fundamental qualities that a diplomat should possess in order to execute his mission effectively. The primary mission of our diplomats is, after all, to promote and advance Malaysia's national interests and government policies abroad.

It is a package of all the knowledge and skills including leadership, integrity, cross-cultural appreciation, positive attitude, public diplomacy, international relations, soft skills diplomacy and negotiation skills, among others.

It is pertinent for our diplomats to

have sound knowledge of Malaysia's interests and the government's policies. It is equally important for them to have a thorough understanding of their host country, covering wide aspects including its history, political system, culture and prevalent tradition, government policies, economic policies and achievements as well as its perspective on issues of international concern. Our diplomats should reach out to establish diverse contacts and build relationships with as many people as possible, especially with those in the circle of influence. Once they are accepted and have wide access to the corridors of power in diverse sectors of interest, maintaining the line of communication open could facilitate them to function effectively.

A diplomat is also his country's eyes and ears. He is on the ground and should therefore have a better feel of issues to report back accurately, objectively and timely for the Ministry to take appropriate policy actions. Hence, the diplomat is duty bound to continuously engage the host country and strive to improve and move the relationship forward.

Other traits include having a keen interest to travel and explore the length and breadth of the host country. A diplomat should also behave with great humility, honesty, and sensitivity to the local customs and traditions at all times. He must never cross the red line and interfere in the internal affairs of his host country. It is an accepted norm that a diplomat must be prepared to sacrifice his personal goal for the sake of his country's interests. At the same time, he must be prepared to NOT take credit for any of the work that he had successfully discharged. As the saying goes – "Diplomacy is often the quiet partner in any negotiation."

Benjamin Franklin put it aptly – "The qualities of a diplomat are sleepless tact, unmovable calmness, and a patience that no folly, no provocation, no blunders may shake." These personal qualities and professional attributes would enable a diplomat to master the delicate dance of diplomacy.

**4. To add value to the institute's programmes, IDFR frequently collaborates with think tanks, universities and non-government organisations. Can you share with our readers who IDFR is in collaboration with at the moment and in what areas?**

Presently IDFR has a joint collaboration with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) on a Master of Social Science in Strategy and Diplomacy, which is already in its 19<sup>th</sup> year and has produced more than 200 graduates. The programme uniquely blends academic perspective and practitioners' input. IDFR looks forward to signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) soon, and is presently exploring possible areas of collaboration with Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM).

IDFR is also collaborating with local think tanks including the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS Malaysia), Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI), Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA), and National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN). We also cooperate with several Foreign Service Institutes around the world, the latest being Prince Saud Al-Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies. The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dato' Sri Anifah Aman has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with his counterpart from the State of Qatar, in the field of training of diplomats.

**5. Where do you see IDFR in the years ahead?**

In line with its transformation exercise, I am confident that DFR will become a premier think tank on diplomacy and international relations in due course. We are only in our first year of moving towards that goal.

We also need to respond to the Fourth Industrial Revolution and equip the young diplomats with the necessary knowledge in order to embrace the opportunities and challenges that come with its advent. The exponential progress of technology – in ICT, Nuclear, Chemical, Space, Ocean Space, Biotechnology, Nanotechnology, etc – necessitates efforts to close the gap of understanding and enhance the working relations between diplomats, scientists and industries to maximise the benefits and mitigate potential disruptions to society.

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 Prior to his appointment as the Director General on 2 February 2017, Datuk Mohamad Sadik was Malaysia's Ambassador to Hungary (2014-2017). He was also former Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran (2009-2014) and Consul General to New York (2004-2008). He also served in various capacities as a Malaysian diplomat to Australia and the Republic of Ghana. At the Ministry, Datuk Mohamad Sadik also previously served as Undersecretary for the Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Oceania Division, Principal Assistant Secretary for the Europe Division and Senior Assistant Secretary for the Policy and Planning Division, among others.



## Brexit – a Clock Ticking in Malaysia

Christian Häberli (PhD)

### An earthquake nobody wanted

On 23 June 2016, 51.9% of Great Britain voters opted to leave the European Union (EU). Many people could not believe it, some still don't. Actually, many Britons admitted to not even knowing what the name "European Union" stands for. But the "remainers" cried, and rallied under blue and golden colours, suddenly remembering their passion for a united Europe. At the same time, "brexiteers" had a field day, inviting their Polish plumbers and neighbours to return to Poland the next day.

The trading and investing world trembled. The British Pound and the stock markets both took a dive, but then recovered from the first shock. Nevertheless, analysts of market fundamentals, and governments, got really nervous: what is going to happen to our exports to a newly divided European market?

After the first shock, optimists prevailed.

A surprising number of pundits expressed the opinion that a traditionally trade-friendly country like the United Kingdom (UK) would maintain their borders at least as open as the EU-28 does, and certainly not become hostage to farm and other parochial interests. Some even thought that the UK would be open for biotech products, apply supplier-friendlier sanitary and phytosanitary standards than the Brussels-based bureaucrats, and would welcome foreign investors even more than before Brexit. Global shippers trusted the free-trading spirit of Great Britain to offer them a Singapore-like free port – including for their goods in transit to the European continent.

And the pessimists had their say too: both a "hard" and a "soft" Brexit would harm everybody, come at a high cost to the British taxpayer, and paralyse the curtailed European Union for years. But very few analysts considered the issue as it arises for third

countries. And even fewer bothered to consider that not only the UK but also the remaining EU will have to redefine their economic and other relations with the rest of the world.

North Americans banked on their privileged relationship with Her Majesty's Government, calmly waiting for a Free Trade Agreement to come their way in a silver wrapping. Politicians in the four European countries too rich to want to join the European Union quickly gave up their hope to see the UK coming back to the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) which it had initiated in 1960 as its then largest member by far.

As for developing countries and former colonies, several countries in the Global South put their trust in their historic ties to one or the other European country, be it as a member of the Commonwealth or the Francophonie. These ties are enshrined in the Cotonou Convention or another preferential trade agreement ensuring their market access. The Côte d'Ivoire Trade Minister feared a weakened Pound and a secluded commodity exchange in London would curtail his country's cocoa export earnings.

But nobody called to reassure them. Indeed: put simply, the EU cannot commit for the UK, and the UK has no time for them.

### While the clock is ticking...

The UK political parties, and public opinion, remain deeply divided on the issue, and often unable to even respond to clarification demands from Brussels. Nevertheless, ignoring pleas even from her own party, on 29 March 2017, the British Prime Minister Theresa May informed the European Commission of her Government's intention to leave the EU, based on Article 50 of the EU Treaty. On that day the clock really started to tick, because it means that on Friday, 29 March 2019 and unless reversed by a qualified majority in the European Council, the EU will continue to exist

with only 27 members, while the 28<sup>th</sup> is out.

Meanwhile, the Chief negotiator for the European Commission, Michel Barnier, seems to be leaning back and waiting for proposals, and money, from London, before he gets ready to talk about post-Brexit market access. At the top of his concerns are EU citizens residing in the UK, the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the "alimonies" he demands from Her Majesty's Government. This focus on divorce proceedings has so far prevented talks about the future relationship between the "divorcees".

And third countries and markets stand by, knowing only that this relationship will affect all of them. The *Financial Times* counted up to 759 international agreements, spanning 168 non-EU countries, which the UK would no longer belong to upon leaving the EU.

### ...what about Malaysia?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Malaysia appears to remain silent on the issue. Few, if any declarations, media and academia-expressed official or other opinions hit the headlines. This raises the question whether anybody looked at the trade figures, or at Malaysia's investments on either side of the Channel? Or is the alleged "policy inertia" which makes slipping into a TPP-11 without the USA appear as a convenient easiest option?<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the reason, or the forum, some exploratory talks, based on a precise assessment of Malaysia's economic priorities, would seem to be in order. Such an assessment should not focus exclusively on trade surpluses with either behemoth. For the time being, given the busy negotiating schedules in London and Brussels – and Prime Minister May's focus on Britain's interests in the USA – it is anyway unlikely that Malaysia's post-Brexit trade interests in Britain figures high up on her agenda. Neither

will the Commission find a lot of time for a Malaysian Prime Minister asking how his exports to the EU-27 might be legally secured.

### What's up?

About the only ascertained fact is that on B-Day – give or take a couple of days (or years...) – the EU Single Market for the circulation of goods, services, capital and labour will split into two: “EU-27” and “UK.” Two “divorcees” instead of one Single Market will not stop attracting trade and investment and job-seekers – but what does that mean for Malaysia’s economic and other interests in a split Europe, where it hitherto had a Common Market to benefit from (and to contend with)?

Do we then all depend on the good will of the “divorcees” to continue trading with outsiders? Or is there a White Knight ensuring Malaysia’s market access rights and coming to the rescue of all third country traders – perhaps the multilateral trading system of the World Trade Organization (WTO)?

### What about the WTO?

A few things are clear. First, after Brexit, the UK automatically regains its status as a WTO Member on its own. It continues to be bound, as before and after its EU accession, by the general GATT rules of non-discrimination. Great Britain will have the same benefits, in terms of market access rules for its exports worldwide, as WTO founding member Malaysia. But Malaysia would do well to carefully analyse its specific WTO rights for its exports of goods and services to the two markets resulting from the divorce. Because while Britain and the EU-27 remain bound by the same WTO rules, almost nothing is clear with respect to their market access concessions and conditions; except for the very general principle that this split must not reduce present market access rights of the world at large.

Second, the EU-27 and the UK have informed the rest of the world that they intend to restructure their so-called “Schedules of commitments and concessions” in a way reflecting the recent trade flows of, respectively, the EU-27 and the UK. So far so bad: the United States, New Zealand and many other countries immediately reacted by saying such a static way of dividing – some would say secluding – market access would preempt their rights in an unacceptable and WTO-incompatible way. What is to be made of such a divergence of the legal interpretation of WTO Rules?

Third, what is clear is that Britain’s historic GATT Schedule, the one in vigour before it joined the EU in January 1973 is out of date. Probably the same goes for an EU reduced by perhaps a tenth of its market and GDP (depending on the way you account for indirect trade and revenues, and forecasts). Anyway, to simply copy the EU-28 schedule by adjusting some figures will not work for a number of specific issues such as “tariff rate quotas” (TRQ) for certain agricultural products, for farm subsidy ceilings, for services and more. On the assumption that it wants to remain a WTO Member, the UK will therefore need to propose its own new schedule reflecting its offers for tariff concessions and other commitments towards all other WTO Members under Articles II, XXIV and XXVIII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). According to the rules, and unless (any) other Member objects to that proposal, the Director General will then certify (i.e. validate) the new schedule of the United Kingdom.

The same goes for the EU-27.

In practical terms this implies, first, a splitting of the EU-28 schedule in two parts and, secondly, a separate process of submission and certification of two new schedules in the WTO. What seems clear from the violent reactions of countries fearing market-access losses in either the UK or the EU-27 is that this schedule certifica-

tion process will not be a simple matter of arithmetics.

So far so (un)clear. But where is the beef? In particular, who quantifies, regulates, and divides the present EU-28 import quotas between these two parties? To give just one example, the EU-28 has a zero-tariff TRQ of almost 300,000 tons of sheep meat – a big quantity considering the still big price differences between the world market and the EU internal market. Different countries have different sub-quantities in that TRQ, and another part of the same TRQ is open for all, or all other countries. The tariff for shipments outside this TRQ is much higher. And even the trade statistics are unclear, because for many shipments the UK is only a transit and not the final destination (or vice-versa). The same goes for sugar, butter and many other products.

And there are other issues. Can ships with Malaysian cargo still access all European ports without problems: first, Europe’s seventh biggest container Port of Felixstowe, and then the biggest one in Rotterdam, or vice-versa? What about landing rights for Malaysia Airlines in different European countries? And what will be the status of Malaysian financial services companies operating from their London headquarters throughout Europe?

### Malaysia’s Trade with the EU-28

To answer such questions and which of them matters most for Malaysia, a close look at the recent trade figures is necessary. In 2016, the UK was Malaysia’s 17<sup>th</sup> largest exports destination, but only the third among its European export markets. In the same year, Malaysia’s five main export items to the UK were Electrical and Electronic Products, Transport Equipment, Wood Products, Machinery, Appliances and Parts, and Rubber Products. As for agricultural products, particularly tropical fruits, Malaysia’s exports are continuously growing. In 2015, the export value of Malaysian fruits to

Europe stood at RM43.41 million, compared to RM41.38 million the previous year.<sup>2</sup>

My suggestion, hence, is for Malaysia to start doing its homework by splitting Malaysia's main exports to the EU over the last three available years into UK and EU-27 final destinations, based on Malaysian customs declarations and EU import statistics. A second set of data should reflect services trade in its different main categories, and Malaysia's investments in UK and EU-27. Very interesting leads for Malaysian priorities could be observed in a compilation of its exports to UK and EU-27 as a percentage of all Malaysian exports, and a description of the transit trade flows.

Looking at these data and at the main export markets and products, some important further questions may be expected.

First, palm oil: will the UK apply the EU decision to ban palm oil in bio-fuels as of 2020? If it does not, can UK fossil fuel enriched with palm oil enter the EU-27 market? If it cannot, what would be the outcome of a legal challenge contemplated by Malaysia (and Indonesia) under WTO rules prohibiting discrimination without a scientific base? And, what is the impact on investments in Malaysian oil palm plantations?

Second, European import quotas (TRQ): the above-described lamb TRQ is imported mainly from Australia and New Zealand. To redefine country quotas under the provisions of GATT-Article XXIV:6 and XXVIII is already a hotly-disputed item on the agenda of trade lawyers and in the British Parliament. Trade data on re-exports to the EU-27 are not available, simply because a product enters the EU-28 only once. Does Malaysia have any products falling under EU TRQ's with country allocations (GATT-Article XIII)?

Third, UK as a transit destination (to

the extent of data availability): What about, say, sugar imported for refining in the UK and then consumed in the UK or in the EU-27?

All these are rather technical issues with a considerable economic background, environmental labour and social implications. Some pundits gather that a stand-alone UK will accept production, or imports, of genetically modified products like oilseeds, or of hormone-treated beef and dairy cows; others are sceptical, arguing UK will revert to its historic island aloofness. The question here is what will be Malaysia's position? What if US chlorine-treated chicken flood the UK market but cannot be imported into continental Europe?

#### Homework

This and other examples amply show that conditions of competition will change with Brexit. As this might also affect Malaysia's interests, a careful analysis of the issues, and of Malaysia's legal rights, and strategic options, would seem to be warranted – the sooner, the better!

Given that such an exercise involves a large number of line agencies, an initial overview – by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – could then be used for an Action Plan involving all concerned line agencies, stakeholders, and of course Malaysia's Embassies and High Commissions in Europe and in Washington, not to forget its WTO Delegation in Geneva. Academics should offer their support in what are sometimes extremely technical issues, both legal and economic.

Malaysian diplomacy is doing a great job in defending the country's interest in all relevant international fora. Human resource constraints are undeniably an issue. But looking at the world's second biggest market breaking apart, not to act on the Brexit file under a Malaysian perspective would

seem to ignore the French diplomatic adage “gouverner c'est prévoir” (to govern is to anticipate).

#### Further Reading

Global Trade and Customs Journal Nr. 12 Issue 3 (March 2017)<sup>3</sup> – examples: Lorand Bartels, The UK's WTO Schedules, pp. 83–86

Christian Häberli, Brexit without WTO-Problems – for UK and for EU and for Global Business? pp. 87–91

Holger Hestermeyer & Federico Ortino, UK Trade Policy Post-Brexit: The Beginning of a Complex Journey. King's College London Dickson Poon School of Law, Legal Studies Research Paper Series: Paper No. 2017-04<sup>4</sup>

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Malaysia Eyes TPP-11, But on Its Terms. By Shankaran Nambiar, Senior Research Fellow, Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) in *East Asia Forum* dated 10 October 2017 (<https://aecnewstoday.com/2017/malaysia-eyes-tpp-11-but-on-its-terms/#ixzz4-v8gglluL>)

<sup>2</sup><https://m.malaysiakini.com/news/361925#kFeDTZizJdieyflux.99>

<sup>3</sup>Available on 10 October 2017 at <http://www.kluwerlawonline.com/toc.php?area=Journals&mode=bypub&level=5&values=Journals~Global+Trade+and+Customs+Journal~Volume+12+%282017%29>

<sup>4</sup>Available on 10 October 2017 at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2861488>

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# The Plight of the Rohingya People and Malaysia's Actions in Condemning the Crisis and Alleviating their Suffering

Sivaranjini Anbalagan and Noraini Nong

## Introduction

The Rohingya people are a minority group living in the western coastal state of Rakhine in Myanmar, and the majority of them are Muslims. Even though they have lived in the country for centuries, they have never been recognised as citizens by the Myanmar Government, and hence, are rendered stateless. After the military coup in 1962, this group of people started facing systematic discrimination by the government. This article provides a general overview of the current situation regarding the plight of the Rohingya people, and details some of Malaysia's actions in the international arena thus far.

## What Happened in August of 2017?

Based on various reports, the ongoing crisis in the Rakhine state worsened when a small group of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a so-called militant group, staged coordinated attacks on government forces on 25 August. In retaliation, the government forces, backed by the local Buddhist militia mob, attacked civilians and burnt down their homes, forcing those who survived to seek refuge from neighbouring countries.

Since the military crackdown took place, more than 700,000 Rohingyas have fled in a mass exodus to the neighbouring state of Bangladesh in order to escape the "textbook exam-

ple of ethnic cleansing" that is unfolding in Myanmar. However, even though the term "ethnic cleansing" has also been used in resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, it has not been recognised as an independent crime under international law.

Many perished along the way during the exodus, and many of those who arrived at the Bay of Bengal were badly wounded and were also in hunger. The sudden mass exodus has led to overstretched border camps, and insufficient food and medical supplies. Hence, there was an urgent and immediate need for humanitarian aid.

## The World Reacts

The United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres along with several world leaders have been appealing for Nobel Prize Winner, Aung San Suu Kyi and Myanmar's security forces to end the senseless actions in the Rakhine state. Hundreds of thousands of innocent lives were callously disregarded. To make matters worse, the curtailment which blocks international humanitarian aid to Rakhine as enforced by Aung San Suu Kyi's government has further risked the lives of the Rohingya people towards precipice of humanitarian catastrophe. Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees addressed this crisis as "the most urgent refugees' emergency in the world".

Many international leaders have voiced their opinion and critics towards the lack of action taken by the United Nations and Myanmar in handling the crisis. Donald Trump, the US president has also urged the U.N. Security council to take a strong and swift action in seeking a long term diplomatic solution towards the century historic tragedy. Bangladesh, who has been helping the Rohingya people, has urged the Myanmar government to create safe zones that will protect the Rohingya people with the United Nations monitoring them.

## Malaysia's Actions

Malaysia too has been very outspoken on this crisis. Earlier this year, at the Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on the Situation of the Rohingya Muslim Minority in Myanmar on 19 January 2017, Prime Minister Dato' Seri Mohd. Najib Tun Abdul Razak cautioned OIC member states of the vulnerability of the Rohingya crisis and the possibility of terrorist organisations infiltrating the Rakhine crisis for their own cause. At the Informal ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (IAMM) in New York on 23 September 2017 to discuss the Humanitarian Situation in the Rakhine State, an ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement was not issued due to differing views on the matter. Philippines, as Chair of ASEAN, however, issued an ASEAN Chairman's statement on the same day. Malaysia had informed Philippines and the other Member



Credit: BERNAMA Images

States that it had decided to disassociate itself from the statement for it is a misinterpretation of the reality of the situation, it was not based on consensus, and it also failed to capture Malaysia's concerns. This decision was also reflected in a Press Release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 24 September 2017, in response to the ASEAN Chairman's statement.

In the above ASEAN meeting, Malaysia had urged the Myanmar Government to end the violence and to allow immediate humanitarian aid to be delivered to the Rakhine State. To that end, Prime Minister Najib Razak had announced during the opening of the OIC Extraordinary Session that Malaysia will contribute RM10 million to assist in humanitarian efforts and social rehabilitation projects in Rakhine. Malaysia had also sent humanitarian mission to Yangon, Myanmar and Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh on 13 February 2017, and dispatched another humanitarian mission to Chittagong, Bangladesh on 9 September 2017. Following the visit of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi to Cox's Bazaar on 16 October, it was announced that Malaysia plans to build a RM3.5 million field hospital at a suitable location near the refugee camp. Malaysia also plans to assign a humanitarian and welfare attaché to be based in Bangladesh to fulfill the government's commitment in helping Rohingya ethnic refugees currently sheltered at refugee camps in the country. The hospital is expected to start its operations by 1 December 2017. More recently, while speaking at the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the D-8 Council of Ministers in Istanbul, Foreign Minister Dato' Sri Anifah Aman called on the D-8 to assist the Rohingya people in any possible way, and to address the community's socio-economic plight. These are just some of the actions that have been taken by Malaysia thus far.

## Conclusion

The Foreign Minister has reiterated that the Malaysian Government is

concerned with the safety, security and wellbeing of the Rohingya people, and stands firm against the injustice done to them. Malaysia will continue to urge the Myanmar Government to end the violence, and will also continue to emphasise the need for the international community to put pressure on Myanmar to cease hostilities against the Rohingyas.

In his speech at the OIC meeting, Prime Minister Najib Razak had also urged Myanmar to heed the words of General Aung San which was delivered in 1946:

"Nowadays, all the world over, we cannot confine the definition of a nationality to the narrow bounds of race, religion and others. Nations are extending their rights of their respective communities even to others who may not belong to them, except by their mere residence amongst them, and their determination to live and be with them..."

Malaysia commends the Government of Bangladesh for doing their utmost in receiving more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees to date, which certainly puts a strain on any country. In the spirit of compassion and humanity, Malaysia calls on the international community to support the humanitarian efforts in Bangladesh.

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## Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Qatar



The Government of Malaysia recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Qatar in the field of training of diplomats. The signing ceremony, held on 16 October 2017, was witnessed by Prime Minister Dato' Seri Mohd. Najib Tun Abdul

Qatar was represented by its Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani. Other Ministry of Foreign Affairs' officials who were at the ceremony include Dato' Seri Ramlan Ibrahim, the Secretary General; YM Dato' Raja Reza Raja Zaib

Razak and the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani in conjunction with the Emir's two-day state visit to Malaysia. Foreign Minister Dato' Sri Anifah Aman represented Malaysia in the signing of the above Memorandum of Understanding, while

Shah, Undersecretary of the West Asia Division; Datuk Mohamad Sadik Kethergany, the Director General of IDFR; and Puan Barathi Muniyandi, IDFR's Head of Corporate Affairs Section.

Four Memorandums of Understanding were signed in total at the ceremony held in Putrajaya. The other three were on higher education; legal cooperation; and judicial cooperation. The Memorandum of Understanding in the field of training of diplomats will include, among others, cooperation in the areas of the exchange of information on the structure and content of training programmes for diplomats; the identification of experts in mutually agreed areas; the exchange of information on the use of Information Technology in diplomacy; and joint research in mutually agreed areas.

## Cultural Diplomacy Lecture Series 2/2017

IDFR recently held its second lecture for the year under its Cultural Diplomacy Lecture Series. The lecture, titled *Promoting Malaysia's Cultural Diplomacy*, was delivered by Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, Minister of Tourism and Culture on 12 October 2017.

In his lecture, Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri said that Malaysia's National Culture Policy was formulated in 1971, and has set guidelines for designing, formulating and sustaining Malaysia's national identity, which is one of moderation and inclusivity. He added that thus far, Malaysia has signed 106 cultural agreements with, among others, India, China, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the ASEAN member states, and these agreements have allowed Malaysia and the partners to officially pursue exchange programmes, dance and musical performances, and other related cultural activities. Among the activities organised was the Malaysia Culture Week, an annual event that promotes and enhances awareness of Malaysia's cultural diversity among foreign

communities. The first and subsequent events were held in London, and in recent years, in Istanbul, Paris and then Baku. Malaysia also participates in world tourism expositions such as the Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin, the world's largest tourism trade fair; World Travel Mart in London; and the Festive Decorations around the World exhibition in Seoul, to promote and to further raise awareness about Malaysia's cultural diversity. However, Malaysia's effort is not just focused overseas. Locally, it also organises many cultural festivals, including Citrawarna; Iftar@KL; and Kuala Lumpur International Craft Festival.

Moving forward, Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri said that the strategy and implementation of Malaysia's cultural diplomacy can be further enhanced by restoring, preserving and developing



culture towards strengthening national culture via joint research, development, education, and cultural expansion and connections; enhancing and strengthening cultural leadership through training and guidance to interested individuals; supporting and mobilizing culture as an effective engine of growth; establishing effective communication to instill national awareness and Malaysian nationalism; fulfilling socio-cultural needs; and improving the standard and quality of the arts.

## Workshop on Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy

IDFR recently organised the Workshop on Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy. Held from 5 to 7 September 2017, the main objective of the workshop was to raise the participants' awareness on cultural diversity; enhance their understanding on the interconnectedness between culture and diplomacy; and provide them with the exposure to the nuances of cross-cultural communication. The focus of this year's workshop was on cultural diplomacy within the ASEAN context.



The highlight of the three-day workshop was a lecture by His Excellency John Subritzky, New Zealand High Commissioner to Malaysia on the topic of *New Zealand's Cultural Diplomacy*. In his lecture, Ambassador Subritzky said that New Zealand has had a long history with regards to cultural diplomacy. The country's first New Zealand High Commissioner to Malaysia was Charles Bennett: a Maori leader, soldier, diplomat and statesman. In Malaysia, Bennett established a very close friendship with Prime Minister

Tunku Abdul Rahman and Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Razak, and at the end of his tenure, was bestowed the title of Tan Sri. The personal friendship and the people-to-people relationship with the highest level that he supported and built was a great foundation for bilateral relationship.

Ambassador Subritzky then gave an overview of New Zealand and its identity. New Zealand is one of the very first countries in the world to

allow women to vote. Hence, it is a country of values such as quality and fairness, democracy, freedom of speech, human rights and open economies, strong belief in the rule of law and security of the global commons in the multilateral system. New Zealand is also a diverse nation. In terms of ethnicity, roughly two-thirds of New Zealanders are Europeans, about 15 per cent are Maori, about 12 per cent are Asians, and six percent are from the Pacific. It is also a nation that is founded on biculturalism, where two distinct cultures coexist.

Ambassador Subritzky added that this year, the High Commission will be focusing on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of New Zealand-Malaysia diplomatic relations. The anniversary is an opportunity for both countries to celebrate the past, reflect on what we have achieved together and look forward to a vibrant partnership in the future.

## IDFR Lecture Series 2/2017



IDFR concluded its second IDFR Lecture Series for 2017 on 19 October

2017. The lecture titled *ASEAN-Australia Relationship and the 2018 Special Summit* was delivered by Ambassador Jane Duke, Australia's Ambassador to ASEAN.

In her interesting lecture, Ambassador Duke acknowledged ASEAN's importance to re-

gional peace, stability and prosperity, and added that she has been looking

forward to the opportunity to discuss Australia's relations with ASEAN, and the country's plans for the 2018 ASEAN-Australia Special Summit to be held in Sydney on 17 and 18 March.

Australia became ASEAN's first dialogue partner in 1974. Australia's Prime Minister then, Gough Whitlam, described ASEAN as "unquestionably the most important, the most relevant, the most natural of the regional organisations", which Ambassador Duke said still holds true today.

In terms of political security, Ambassador Duke stated that we are



witnessing a historic shift of power in the region, and the regional organisation's response to these challenges has the potential to shape expectations of acceptable strategic behaviour and reinforce a culture that respects international norms. ASEAN's ability to speak as one also gives it greater influence on the global stage. The challenge for ASEAN is to sustain a more complex future, which it is well placed to do through forums such as the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus, and the ASEAN Regional Forum; all of which Australia is a member of.

Ambassador Duke added that ASEAN is also very important to Australia's economic prosperity. It is the country's third largest trading partner – accounting for approximately AUD\$93 billion in two-way trade – and a 2017 Australian Business in ASEAN survey shows

that Australian companies that have made the move to the region are thriving and confident about their growth prospects.

The foundation for Australia's strong ties with ASEAN is their long standing and extensive people-to-people links. These close personal ties have been forged through education and through Australia's diaspora communities. Ambassador Duke provided some figures to support this – nearly 20 per cent of all international students in Australia, over 100,000 students this year – come from ASEAN member states; over 1.3 million Australian residents were born in ASEAN countries or have Southeast Asian ancestry, and more than 115,000 Malaysian-born people live in Australia.

Ambassador Duke also emphasised that Australia and ASEAN relations

are at a high point. Among others, Australia has extensive cooperation across ASEAN's three pillars and regular Ministerial and senior official level dialogues in different sectors. Australia-ASEAN relations were upgraded to a Strategic Partnership in 2014, and the following year, the leaders committed to hold biennial summits.

The Australia's Ambassador to ASEAN concluded her lecture by informing the audience that Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has invited the ten ASEAN leaders to the Special Summit, which aims to strengthen Australia's partnership with ASEAN and generate fresh momentum as ASEAN enters its next 50 years.

## Forum: *Empowering Women, Empowering Malaysia*

On 11 October 2017, the Diploma in Diplomacy participants organised a forum titled *Empowering Women, Empowering Malaysia*. Moderated by Mr. Norafizan Mustafa, President of DID 2017, the panellists were Dato' Ismail Yahya, Former Mufti of Terengganu and Former Chief Judge of Syarie Court Terengganu; Associate Professor Dr. Madeline Berma, Academician and Former Director of Tun Fatimah Institute for Women Leadership, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; Ms. Abir Abdul Rahim, Co-Founder of Lean in Malaysia, a women-led non-profit organisation; and Ms. Ajanis Anak Ba-I, Assistant Director of Guidance and Counselling Division, Department of Women Development, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.

In his welcoming remarks, Datuk Mohamad Sadik Kethergany, the Director General of IDFR, highlighted that 35 per cent of women in the Malaysian public sector are holding

higher management and decision-making positions. This is a representation of how Malaysia has progressed in empowering women at work. He also acknowledged the challenges faced by women today. Datuk Mohamad Sadik explained that in line with the teachings of Islam, women are regarded highly in the society. Nonetheless, he was of the view that the empowering of women should be consistent with the empowering of men, children, families and ultimately, the entire society. He also mentioned that it is important to ensure that nobody is left behind in the country's development.

The panel discussion that followed



revolved around three main points: self-value and self-worth; women empowerment; and societal expectations.

Dato' Ismail Yahya, who was the first panellist, quoted *Surah Ar-Rum Verse 21* from the Holy Quran which highlights the importance of affection, love, tolerance and respect for each other in our daily lives. He added that empowerment is about understanding



our rights and responsibilities. Islam encourages and promotes women empowerment, and women are encouraged to know more about their rights. Dato' Ismail said that couples entering matrimony must also learn and be more equipped with knowledge on their rights and responsibilities. This is to ensure the sustainability of the family institution in Malaysia.

Associate Professor Dr. Madeline Berma stated that modern day's expectations towards women are higher and much more complex than before, when they were mostly judged by their domestic skills. She added that an empowered woman is described as having a vision, graceful, soft-hearted yet strong, and she must be respected for her mind and admired for her heart and her honesty.

She is also smart and confident. However, Dr. Berma stressed that the issue of empowerment should also apply to men. Both men and women must know their rights and responsibilities.

The third panellist, Ms. Abir Abdul Rahim, advocated the need for society to empower women to achieve their full potential in their career and their life, without being judged. She said that women today face tougher challenges in meeting societal expectations. Ms. Abir shared the current situation in the corporate world, where there is still an unequal playing field in the work force. Hence, more initiatives must be created to ensure equal opportunities for women at the work place.

Ms. Ajanis Anak Ba-I explained that many initiatives have been undertaken

by the Government to encourage women to return to the work force after maternity leave. This includes the introduction of flexible working hours and the flexibility of working from home. The Government also includes assistance for women in need in its yearly budget. Recently, the Government introduced the *Komuniti Perwani 1Malaysia* programme, another initiative to empower women in Malaysia.

The panellists concluded that Malaysia can be a better country when we empower women to participate effectively in society alongside men. Empowering women is about providing equal opportunities to them in the challenging world today. Hence, a more conducive environment must be provided for them to make their own choices and to pursue their dreams in life.

## Malaysia-Australia Young Diplomats' Round Table 2017



The Malaysia-Australia Young Diplomats Round Table is a biennial programme which aims to strengthen the relationship between Australia and Malaysia through stronger networking. It takes place in Kuala Lumpur and

Malaysian young diplomats to the programme.

The three-day programme was designed to enhance diplomatic co-operation and networking among the

Canberra on a rotation basis.

The fifth Malaysia-Australia Young Diplomats Round Table was held at IDFR from 6 to 8 September 2017. Datuk Mohamad Sadik Kethergany, IDFR's Director General and H.E. Rod Smith, Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia, welcomed 24 Australian and

young diplomats and to provide them with the opportunity to participate in lectures and discussion sessions on issues of interest to both Malaysia and Australia. It reinforces the two countries' strong ties, mutual experiences and common goals. The young diplomats also had the opportunity to share their countries' best practices and cultivate the culture of dialogue. Aside from the classroom activities, the young diplomats were also feted to a luncheon hosted by Datuk Mohamad Sadik at IDFR and a reception hosted by H.E. Rod Smith at his official residence.

The next Malaysia-Australia Young Diplomats Round Table will be hosted by Australia in 2019.

## Inaugural Future Diplomats PeaceGame

On 1 and 2 November 2017, a junior officer from the Ministry of Fo-

reign Affairs will be attending the first ever Future Diplomats PeaceGame

Abu Dhabi 2017, to be held in the capital city of the United Arab Emi-

rates. The officer, Mr. Muhammad Azhari Azmi, is currently attending the Diploma in Diplomacy programme at IDFR.

A collaboration between *Foreign Policy* magazine, the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University, and the Emirates Diplomatic Academy, and together with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates, the two-day exercise will see young diplomats from around the world address the challenges of conflict resolution and peacebuilding with the same creativity and focus as

have been traditionally devoted to war games.

When asked about his expectations of the Peacegame, Mr. Muhammad Azhari said that given the fact that the programme was first held in 2013, the concept introduced by PeaceGame is novel. It adopts a different approach towards conflict resolution and peace-building. Considering the emergence of non-traditional security threats and the surge of non-state actors, the global peace equilibrium is facing disruption like never before. Hence, his participation at the PeaceGame will provide him with the opportunity to discover alternative

ways or rather, more effective ways, of achieving and maintaining peace. In addition, considering that the programme will gather 25 participants representing different countries around the world, it will be an invaluable platform for him to learn from their respective countries' best practices and also to share Malaysia's experience in the relevant context.

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In the next issue of the *Diplomatic Voice*, we will share Mr. Muhammad Azhari's take on his PeaceGame experience.

## What they say



*Sofiko Balanchivadze, a participant of the MTCP: Strategic Analysis Course for International Participants from Georgia (centre) shares with us several modules in the above course that had an impact on her.*

No matter how many courses you attend and how important the courses are, the truth is that each one holds a special meaning to you and may have an influence on your future activities. In my case, the Strategic Analysis Course, held from 14 to 24 August 2017 at IDFR, answered and exceeded all my expectations. There were several modules which I held in high regard.

First of all, it was extremely interesting to listen to the international negotiation lecture, where the lec-

turer emphasised the most important points on this essential topic. Her through knowledge of the whole subject gave us more motivation and interest to fully engage in the activities. Being in a foreign service requires us to have a lot of skills,

and negotiation skills, in this respect, are essential. The main learning point from this particular lecture was how crucial the details and in-depth information on the subject are. I learnt that we should always be aware of the other side's strategy as much as possible as it can have a direct impact on our particular aim. The case studies that were discussed during the lecture made this point even clearer. The mistakes that I made while discussing the case studies will be a major reminder for me in dealing with similar scenarios in the future.

Another lecture that I would like to highlight is the Blue Ocean Strategy, which was a totally new area for me. Hence, starting with the introduction and continuing with understanding

the concepts behind this strategy was very interesting. The case studies on how Malaysia uses this strategy to boost its economic growth were very important. Considering that Georgia is a fast developing country and attaches great importance to economic growth and innovations, it will be important for me to share Malaysia's Blue Ocean Strategy with my colleagues in Georgia.

Malaysia in ASEAN was another interesting lecture to listen to. As I work in the Department of Europe in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and we deal with different issues altogether, it was very interesting for me to hear thorough information about the regional organisation itself and specifically, Malaysia's role in it.

Last but not least, it is also noteworthy to mention the impact that the Sabah trip had on me. In the three days there, we had the opportunity to visit not only the touristic and cultural attractions, but we were also able to observe closely how successfully the state utilises its touristic and economic potential. It is definitely something I will share with my colleagues back home.

## 2017/2018 Master of Social Science

The 2017/2018 Master of Social Science students, comprising thirteen Malaysian students and one international student from Afghanistan, attended a three-day orientation session prior to the start of their programme.

During the orientation session, the students were briefed by Professor

Ekhwan Toriman, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, and Associate Professor Dr. Sity Daud, Chairperson of the School of History, Politics and Strategic Studies; both of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. This was prior to a familiarization tour of the university's library.

The students also had the opportunity to have a discussion with Datuk Mohamad Sadik Kethergany, the Director General of IDFR.

We welcome the new students to the IDFR family.

## Courtesy Calls on the Director General

Several courtesy calls were made on the Director General in the last three months.

His Excellency Shanker Das Bairagi, Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal visited IDFR on 10 July 2017. H.E. Bairagi was interested to learn more about IDFR's role as the training arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia. He was also keen to send several Home-Based Staff in Kuala Lumpur to the basic Malay language course.

His Excellency Rod Smith, Australian

High Commissioner to Malaysia, called on Datuk Mohamad Sadik on 18 August 2017. Among others, the Director General and H.E. Smith discussed further on the organising of the Malaysia-Australia Young Diplomats Round Table 2017. It was also at the courtesy call that H.E. Smith proposed for IDFR and the High Commission to coorganise a public lecture by Ambassador Jane Duke, Australia's Ambassador to ASEAN.

On 20 September 2017, Datuk Mohamad Sadik welcomed His Excellency A.J.M Muzammil, High Commissioner

of Sri Lanka to Malaysia to IDFR. H.E. Muzammil has been the new Sri Lankan High Commissioner since January 2017. He replaced his predecessor, H.E. Ibrahim Sahib Ansar. During the discussion, H.E. Muzammil expressed desire to establish closer cooperation between IDFR and the Bandaranaike International Diplomatic Training Institute.

Aside from the above courtesy calls, Datuk Mohamad Sadik also received the visit of Mr. No'man Ahmad, Registrar of Universiti Malaysia Sabah on 12 September 2017.

*Continued from page 1*

from their respective countries. The DiD participants exhibited the cultural aspects of countries representing the four foreign languages that they are currently learning – Arabic, French, Mandarin and Spanish. The UMS course participants, on the other hand, performed *Tarian Sumazau*, a lively traditional dance from the state of Sabah which got many in the audience, including the foreign participants, joining in the dance. Other performances were the *Cibi*, an engaging traditional Fijian war dance, the Kenyan's fascinating welcoming dance, and the *Bhangra*, a Punjabi traditional dance.

Istana Budaya wowed the audience with a captivating and colourful fashion show on traditional costumes from the different races as well as states in Malaysia. There was also a special showcase by the ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat which saw national costumes from the ten member countries being exhibited, as part of Malaysia's ASEAN@50 celebration. Last but not least, Kraftangan Malaysia offered the opportunity for visitors to its booth to try their hand at batik painting.

To add to the gaiety, a competition for best dressed (male and female

category), best booth and best performance was held. The winners were Mr. Afdal Izal Md. Hashim from IDFR (best dressed male) and Ms. Dorothy Chebet Rotich from Kenya (best dressed female); the DiD Arabic class (DiD) for best booth and the UMS participants for best performance. We laud their effort, as well as those who participated in the competition and the overall event.

IDFR hopes to continue making the CAD an annual event, and plans to invite a bigger participation in the future.

## News Contributors

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