

DIPLOMATIC VOICE

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

ISSN 2289-1277

Tall Order for New Foreign Minister



Credit to Wisma Putra, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia

CONTENTS

- 1-2 Tall Order for New Foreign Minister
- 3 Highlight
- 4-10 Forum
- 11-17 News
- 18 - 20 In and Around IDFR

Follow us on
Facebook and Twitter
@IDFRMalaysia

Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, has helmed several ministries in the last 20 years, but as revealed by him - a dream he keeps by himself - it is always his wish to join one particular ministry.

That dream came true when he was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia on 9 March 2020. The moment he set foot at Wisma Putra after the first cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin was in his element.

As introductions were made, the Foreign Minister exchanged greetings, offered selfies with officers and at one time he even chatted cheerfully with an officer whom he must have met during his stint as the Defence Minister. As they sang *Negaraku* and the *Wisma Putra* song, many noticed his face turning red. After the welcoming ceremony, an officer revealed that the Foreign Minister looked slightly emotional and was visibly moved. It seemed he did not expect that kind of reception.

In his speech, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin mentioned several times that he was back to serve the people and country. He further mentioned that the government was currently facing various challenges. He then emphasised the importance of carrying out work without any self-interest, without being narrow-minded or the politics of hate and divide.

He further added that it is his wish as the Minister that *"we have to be different because there is so much hate out there not only in the country but globally. Our strength is the basic good that all Malaysians have"*. After the welcoming ceremony and a short press conference, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin got down to work with briefings from senior officials.

Maintaining peaceful relations with all countries and staying neutral between adversaries are among the approaches that Malaysia's foreign policy would take. These approaches had served as a guide for the Foreign Minister within the first 100 days he assumed office.



Credit to Bernama

His stint as Defence Minister has given him extensive experience in dealing with major powers on strategic issues.

In the 100 days that he had helmed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin had overseen the success of *Wisma Putra* in bringing back Malaysians stranded overseas following the Covid-19 pandemic. *"Many Malaysians were brought home, with over 20,000 from 70 countries. That's a fact and no one can deny Wisma Putra's success in the last 100 days,"* he said at a press conference when asked about his 100-day achievement at *Wisma Putra* after the Special ASEAN-Russia Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Covid-19.

During the 100-day period, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin had also personally made an effort to put *Wisma Putra* and its personnel as crucial frontliners in the process of nation-building. *"In a borderless world, it is hoped that Wisma Putra's role will be better recognised under my leadership,"* he said.

During the Movement Control Order (MCO), Dato' Seri Hishammuddin used diplomatic relations and his initiative as the Malaysian Foreign Minister to contact his counterparts to bring home Malaysian citizens stranded overseas. For example, on 13 April 2020, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin contacted H.E. Dr. S Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India via telephone to speak on bilateral relations between the

two countries. Among the issues discussed was the repatriation of 2,876 Malaysians stranded in India. Dato' Seri Hishammuddin expressed his appreciation to the Government of India for allowing 18 rescue flights to bring Malaysian citizens home which was at that point, the largest number of flight a country was allowed by the Government of India.

Prior to his appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin held a number of prominent cabinet posts, among others, Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs, and Minister of Education.

"My wish as the minister is that we have to be different because there is so much hate out there not only in the country but globally. Our strength is the basic good that all Malaysians have."

"That is what makes us respected. It is not something you can buy with money but comes from our sincere intention that we do this for the country, race and religion. It is also for our future generation."

IDFR Lecture Series 1/2020: Healing the Nation 2.0



On 6 August 2020, IDFR successfully held its first lecture for the year under its IDFR Lecture Series. The lecture, titled *Healing the Nation 2.0*, was delivered by the esteemed speaker, HRH Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin ibni Tuanku Muhriz, Founding President of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) and IDFR's Distinguished Fellow.

This topic is a continuation and an update on the topic of Healing the Nation, which Tunku Zain spoke on at various venues and on several occasions in 2015. In healing the nation, he stated that we must first agree on what its original health was and how that health has been damaged. After Independence, there were efforts to create a sense of shared identity – the *Rukun Negara*, Vision 2020, and 1Malaysia were some examples – and each has had a varying degree of success in fostering bonds between citizens. Tunku Zain added that there are also other ways to measure a nation's health including international indices which compare countries according to standards such as the state of democracy, human rights, economic freedom, and the ease of doing business. However, they do not capture important nuances within countries when multiple institutions might be involved. He then reiterated the conclusions of his lecture in 2015: that

schools, universities, and the education system in general is a crucial component in re-forging a shared sense of identity; that having platforms to debate views pertaining to the national vision is vitally important; and that national healing needs moral leadership.

During his lecture, Tunku Zain encourages young Malaysians to be informed on current issues and understand that government matters. He also stated that he is hopeful that the various discussions he has had with the relevant ministries and Parliament and the Judiciary will assist in revamping the education of the next generation of Malaysians on the origin, function, and operation of our national institutions. He cited the recent *Digital Parliament* – a radical yet conservative initiative by

youth with support from civil society and international organisations – that saw young Malaysians debate issues including infrastructure disparities, unemployment, minimum wage, upskilling and reskilling, digital literacy, and access to education and nutrition. Here, the use of such new platforms suggests a healthy trend.

In relation to the change of government in May 2018 and again in February 2020, Tunku added that Malaysia needs leadership that places the interests of the country first. Sustainably healing the nation will require perceptions on the quality of leaders to be addressed. However, in the medium to long term, it requires leaders to understand the concerns of millions of Malaysians who have long held suspicions and distrust of their fellow citizens and political players.

Tunku Zain concluded his lecture by stating that the noticeable and welcome shift in the language of good governance provides renewed opportunities for all Malaysians to have a proper understanding of our Federal Constitution and the origins, functions, and operation of our institutions; for all Malaysians to have the ability to debate, without fear, competing visions of the future in a peaceful, respectful and inclusive way; and for all Malaysians to nurture and elevate leaders who successfully embody these democratically articulated desires.



The Role of Economic Diplomacy in the Economic Recovery Post-Pandemic

Sufian Jusoh

Introduction

This article discusses the role of Malaysian diplomats in exercising diplomacy in assisting Malaysia to recovery from the economic shock caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The emergence of Covid-19 as a pandemic has caused major disruptions in international trade and investment to the world and Malaysia. As an open economy and a trading nation where trade is about 131 percent of the GDP in 2018, Malaysia is vulnerable to external demand, hence the need to find ways to mitigate Malaysia's economic shocks as a result of the pandemic. While acknowledging the importance of safeguarding lives during this pandemic period, it is also important to safeguard the business community and Malaysia's position as a significant player in the global value chain and supply chains. Malaysia cannot escape the global economic downturn resulting from the declining international trade and investment.

The article first discusses the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the global and Malaysian economy. This is followed by the discussion on the role of economic diplomacy to assist Malaysia on the road to the economic recovery Post-Pandemic.

Impact of Covid-19 on the Economy

The preventive behaviour of individual enforced by the national governments' preventive measures to contain the Covid-19 pandemic contributes to the sharp decline in the economies around the world. These preventive measures contribute to the sharp declines in the domestic demand, lower tourism, business travel trade, and global connectivity by air and sea in all countries. These three factors in return cause the decline in the global trade, global production linkages, production networks, global consumption, and the disruption in the supply-chains.¹

As an open economy relying on international trade and foreign direct investments (FDI), Malaysia falls within the group of countries that the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) predict are most severely affected by the pandemic, i.e. open economies in terms of trade and FDI, significant exporters of services and host countries experiencing the outbreak.² According to the latest International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook June 2020, global economy is projected to contract at -4.9 percent in 2020, 1.9 percentage points below the April 2020 World Economic Outlook (WEO) forecast.³ The IMF states that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a more negative impact on activity in the first half of 2020 than anticipated, and the recovery is projected to be more gradual than previously forecasted. In 2021, global growth is projected at 5.4 percent. The impact on selected regional economies is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Projected Real GDP Growth 2020 and 2021, (IMF and World Bank where indicated)

Economy	Real GDP Growth 2020 (April 2020)	Real GDP Growth 2021 (April 2020)	Revised GDP (June 2020)	Real Growth (June 2020)
China	1.2	9.2	1.0	8.2
Japan	-5.2	3	-5.8	2.4
Korea	-1.2	3.4	-2.1	3
Malaysia	-1.7	9	-3.8	6.3
Singapore	-3.5	3	NA	NA
Thailand	-6.7	6.1	-7.7	5.0

Source: IMF World Economic Outlook April 2020, https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD, last accessed 24 June 2020; and World Economic Outlook, June 2020 Update.

Malaysia, as an open economy is cognisant of the declining world trade and foreign direct investment. The World Trade Organization (WTO) estimated world merchandise trade to shrink between -12.9% and -31.9% in 2020 (2019: -0.1%) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Trade is only anticipated to rebound around 21.3% to 24% in 2021.⁴ The COVID-19 results in a projected fall in global Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by more than 40 percent in 2020, and the developing Asia faces a 45 percent

decline in FDI in the same year.⁵ As a result of Covid-19, more than two-thirds of multinational investors in developing countries are reporting disruptions in supply chains, declines in revenues, and falls in production. The World Bank's survey on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic shows a worsening investment scenario in the next coming months.⁶

The Covid-19 pandemic further contributes to Malaysia's already challenging exports and FDI scene. Malaysia's export of goods and services had already experienced a steady decline since 2019 and is trending downward in 2020. Malaysia's export amounted to RM986.4 billion in 2019, a decline of 1.7% over 2018. Malaysia's exports of products and services are expected to decline by 13.6 per cent in 2020⁷ (compared to 1.1 percent decline recorded in 2019).

Malaysia's FDI inflow has also been seeing

some challenges, with some downward trend in the recent years. Comparatively, Malaysia is facing intense competition from ASEAN peers. COVID-19 brought further risks to Malaysia's investment scene. COVID-19 enhances Malaysia's FDI risk exposures due to the high rate of Covid-19 infections in Malaysia's trading partners and FDI sources. Based on United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), FDI's weighted average between 2013-2017, 14.7 percent of FDI came from the US

(as of 13 May 2020, 1,322,054 cases), 5.2 percent from Switzerland (30,297 cases), 4.8 percent from Germany (171,306 cases), and 3.7 percent from South Korea (10,962 cases). The highly impacted sectors are consumer cyclical, basic materials, and industrials.

To add to the Covid-19 caused by economic downturn, economies all over the world are also concerned with protectionist measures. The leaders are generally concerned about the free flow of vital medical supplies and equipment, critical agricultural products, and other essential goods and services across borders.⁸ On 23 April 2020, WTO reports that 80 countries and customs territories have introduced export prohibitions and restrictions due to Covid-19. It draws attention to the lack of transparency at the multilateral level and the long-term risks that export restrictions pose to the global supply chains and public welfare.⁹

Hence, the Leaders and Ministers in charge of trade in ASEAN, APEC, and G20 called for a free, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade, and investment environment and to take measures to facilitate trade in essential goods and address non-tariff barriers. Any emergency measures to tackle COVID-19, if deemed necessary, must be targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary, and that they do not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global supply chains, and are consistent with the rules of the WTO.

The Role of Economic Diplomacy in the Economic Recovery

Nevertheless, behind a crisis, there is an opportunity. The widespread restrictions on the movement of people pose new trends in working and life habits such as working-from-home, online learning, and broader adoption of online meetings. The changing trend contributes to the upward trend in trade, digital technology, communication technology, and e-commerce related services.

Malaysia needs to be able to capitalise

on these opportunities to enhance its economic recovery by encouraging more international trade and FDI into the country. Economic diplomacy has an important role to play to assist Malaysia towards full economic recovery and look for new trade and investment opportunities post pandemic. Economic diplomacy encompasses a broad concept of diplomacy and economic policy that leads to the cross-utilisation of diplomacy, economics, and politics. There is no standard or universal definition of “economic diplomacy”. The term “economic diplomacy” influences the practice of diplomacy from two separate angles, that is the utilisation of economy and economic position to pursue a country’s agenda through the practice of diplomacy; and on the flip is the use of diplomacy by a country to pursue economic interests in or with another country.

The efforts to enhance exports and promote Malaysia as an FDI destination is a collective one, without any exclusivity to any particular organisation. Malaysia must start early to promote Malaysia’s products for exports and diversify export markets whilst looking for new FDIs in existing and new promoted sectors. Trade promotion, investment promotion, and economic diplomacy must be seen as an integral part of Malaysia’s positioning as an important trade and investment powerhouse. Diplomatic missions under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) should also be roped in to support trade and investment promotions in locations where MITI agencies are not directly represented.

Several regional peers are already taking aggressive steps towards promoting economic recovery. For example, Singapore has signed several agreements with Brunei, Chile, and New Zealand to promote open trade, free flow of logistics, and enhancement in digital trade. Malaysia could also be looking at taking similar steps. In terms of international trade policy, apart from being a member of the WTO, ASEAN, and APEC, Malaysia also signed seven bilateral FTAs and seven regional FTAs through ASEAN. Malaysia is actively

negotiating several other FTAs, and is encouraged to sign and ratify FTAs to attract more trade and investments into Malaysia.

In investment promotion and facilitation, Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) has been granted an additional budget under the PENJANA to attract more investments into Malaysia. MIDA is also given the task to attract investors who would like to relocate their investments and diversify their supply chains. MIDA has been focusing on attracting investments in high value-added, technology intensive, and knowledge-based economy into the country. Among new growth areas demarcated by Malaysia includes technologies associated with the IR 4.0 such as big data, cloud computing, Internet of Things, and artificial intelligence.

In trade promotion, MATRADE may identify key sectors to invigorate exports including market diversification. MATRADE may categorise them within the domestic supply chains and provide assistance to the exporters to generate value. Most obvious is to promote essential sectors i.e. medical devices and food sectors, whilst continue working on sectors that have already generated exports (Electrical and Electronics (E&E), Chemical, pre-packaged food, etc). In diversifying the market, Malaysia should look closer to home. It should encourage more intra-ASEAN trade whilst seeking more intra-ASEAN investments. Some ASEAN member states can be linked to the Malaysian value chains and supply chains.

Conclusions

The Covid-19 pandemic came unexpectedly and has caused the global economy to suffer a sudden downturn. This incident is totally unprecedented and requires a strong policy decision to overcome the challenges. The challenges are two-folds, i.e. covid-caused and covid-pushed, meaning the Covid-19 exacerbates an already existing problem. One of the main policy decisions is to employ and

practise economic diplomacy to gain the maximum benefits from the opportunities posed by the changes in the economic activities and interests post-pandemic. The economic diplomacy has to employ “whole government” approach.

Endnotes

¹ Asian Development Bank (2020), ADB Briefs No. 128, the Economic Impact of the Covid-19 Outbreak in Developing Asia, 6 March 2020.

² World Bank. (2020a). East Asia Pacific Economic Update April 2020: COVID-19 and the EAP Region.

³ International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2020a), World Economic Outlook 2020, June 2020, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020>

⁴ World Trade Organisation (WTO) (2020a), Covid-19 and the World Trade, Retrieved on 5 April 2020 from https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/covid19_e/covid19_e.htm

⁵ International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2020b), World Economic Outlook 2020, April 2020, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020>

⁶ World Bank Group (2020b). Global Investment Competitiveness Report 2019/2020: Rebuilding Investor Confidence in Time of Uncertainty. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1536-2.

⁷ Bank Negara Malaysia (2020), Economic and Monetary Review 2019.

⁸ ASEAN (2020), Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (14 April 2020).

⁹ World Trade Organisation (2020b), WTO Report finds growing number of restrictions in response to Covid-19 crisis. <https://wto.org/english>

Professor Dr. Sufian Jusoh is Director of International Trade and Investment at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Malaysia's and Asia's Success in Curbing the COVID-19 Pandemic

Roy Anthony Rogers Peter Rogers

The Malaysian government is actively working to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Various domestic and international efforts have been taken by the authorities. Among the local measures include the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) throughout the country as well as the People's Concerned Economic Stimulus (Prihatin)¹ package announced by Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yasin to help citizens survive this trying time.

However, internationally, not many people are aware that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or better known as Wisma Putra, through Malaysian representatives around the world, has been directly involved. Malaysia's diplomatic efforts in facing the COVID-19 pandemic can be divided into two. Firstly, bringing home citizens stranded abroad. Secondly, intensifying bilateral cooperation in the field of medical research with other countries such as China, South Korea, Russia, India, and Bosnia to produce a cure or vaccine for the COVID-19 virus. In addition, Malaysia is also stepping up multilateral cooperation to curb the COVID-19 pandemic through ASEAN and WHO.²

Most countries in the world have declared movement control orders. This has caused many Malaysians who are abroad as employees, students,

tourists, and religious people to be stranded. The task of bringing citizens back safely is up to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Currently the Malaysian government has 110 delegates worldwide. To bring back citizens from abroad, Malaysian representatives must get the cooperation from the host government.

Malaysian diplomats working at Malaysian embassies need to obtain support from agencies in the host country such as the immigration department, health department, police, and airlines to smoothen the repatriation process. The process of bringing home citizens is not easy without the existence of friendly diplomatic relations between Malaysia and foreign countries. This involves the ability of Malaysian diplomats to interact with host government officials to work together.

At the same time, in return as a sign of appreciation, the Malaysian government is always prepared to assist and cooperate with foreign delegates to bring home their own citizens who are stranded in Malaysia. Apart from that, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Honourable Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein himself used diplomatic relations and his initiative as the Malaysian Foreign Minister to contact his counterparts

for this purpose. For example, on 13 April 2020, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin contacted Dr. S Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India via telephone to speak on bilateral relations between the two countries.³ Among the issues discussed was the repatriation of 2,876 Malaysians stranded in India. Dato' Seri Hishammuddin expressed his appreciation to the government of India for allowing 18 flights to bring Malaysian citizens home.

Apart from that, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin had a phone discussion with several colleagues such as Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Foreign Relations of Sri Lanka,⁴ and Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Pakistani⁵ Foreign Minister regarding the return of their citizens due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an example of a personal diplomacy where a Foreign Minister acts by himself to make phone calls and forge friendship to obtain the cooperation of other countries.

Since the spread of the COVID-19 virus as well as movement control orders, citizens stranded in China, India, Iran, Indonesia, Italy, Turkey, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Brunei Darussalam, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Chad, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, and Peru have been

brought back to Malaysia – thanks to the hard work of all Wisma Putra staff. Credit must be given to the diplomats in foreign delegations and Malaysia's Foreign Minister for this success.

In addition to Malaysian citizens, the government also brought back citizens of other countries on the same flight. For example, on 24 April 2020, the Malaysian government facilitated the return of 17 Indonesian citizens, 6 Singaporeans, 9 Japanese, and 2 South Koreans who were stranded in Morocco together with Malaysian citizens.⁶ Upon arrival in Malaysia, they subsequently boarded a connecting flight to return to their respective countries. Similarly, the Singapore government extended their assistance to bring back a group of Malaysians along with Singaporeans who were stranded in Saudi Arabia.⁷ This clearly symbolises the spirit of ASEAN solidarity as well as the close relationship between Malaysia and Singapore.

Apart from repatriating citizens, Wisma Putra together with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) are also actively strengthening scientific cooperation with foreign countries to find solutions to curb the COVID-19 virus. For example, through the efforts of Wisma Putra, Bosnia, India, and Turkey have agreed to supply Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and work with the Ministry of Health Malaysia through the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Division (NPRA) for expert exchange and laboratory studies. Russia has also expressed a desire to share expertise with Malaysia through the Joint Malaysia-Russia Commission for Economic, Scientific Technical and Cultural Cooperation (ESTC).⁸ It is noteworthy to mention that Wisma Putra has taken its own initiatives to provide necessary assistances to the Malaysian missions abroad. This is done through Malaysia's Diplomatic Equipment Stockpile (MDES). Foreign Minister, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin emphasised that MDES was established as Wisma Putra did not wish to burden the government further by obtaining equipment for its frontline personnel.⁹

The Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also channelled humanitarian aid to countries that are facing challenges in curbing the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has contacted President Šefik Džaferović, President of Bosnia Herzegovina¹⁰ and agreed to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Bosnia Herzegovina who are severely affected by medical equipment constraints. In addition, the Prime Minister has also received calls from President Mahmoud Abbas, President of Palestine where they exchanged views on developments in the Middle East. In addition, President Mahmoud Abbas requested for humanitarian assistance from the Malaysian government in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹¹

Wisma Putra through overseas delegates is trying to convince foreign investors to continue investing in Malaysia by providing a true picture of the economic scenario as well as the policy taken by the government to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Malaysian diplomats abroad are also exploring investment opportunities for Malaysian companies to help restore the country's economy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is interesting to note that the transmission of the COVID-19 virus has shown significant differences in the ways and outcomes of countries in Asia such as China, Japan, South Korea, and Malaysia compared to countries in the West such as the United States (US), Britain, Italy, France, Canada, and Germany. Statistically, Asian countries have been found to be more successful in controlling the transmission of COVID-19 virus as well as lowering the mortality rates than European and North American countries. The question is how can such a phenomenon occur? What is the 'secret' of the success of Asian countries in facing the COVID-19 pandemic? This article lists five key factors.

Firstly, the level of crisis preparedness and management in Asia is more robust compared to European and

US countries. In early January, when the situation in Wuhan, China became increasingly serious, neighbouring countries such as South Korea and Japan began to block travel with China as well as intensify the COVID-19 detection test. Secondly, the experience of Asian countries in facing previous epidemics such as SARS, MERS, Zika virus, and dengue fever has taught us to always be alert. Wearing a face mask was already a common practice prior to the transmission of COVID-19 – it is common for people who have a cough or cold to wear one when they are in public. Therefore, when the COVID-19 pandemic started spreading in Asia, there was no issue among Asians in wearing a face mask as compared to the West. In addition, government agencies in Asia such as the Ministry of Health, police, and military are better prepared to face the virus transmission crisis because they already have the practice of dealing with disease outbreaks.

Thirdly, the leadership of Asian leaders is more pro-active because they are prepared to take drastic measures such as declaring a motion control command to control the spread of COVID-19. Not only that, the leaders in Asia themselves role model by often being seen wearing face masks and gloves – hence, it is unsurprising that the citizens emulate their actions. For example, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tan Sri Muhyiddin was seen wearing a face mask during a gathering at the Prime Minister's Department, in the parliament, and other inauguration ceremonies. Similarly, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have always been seen wearing face masks.

Fourthly, cultural and traditional factors play a part. In the West, the aspect of individual freedom is more important than the common interest. As a result, many people in Western countries such as the US openly object to the movement control order because they view it as a violation of their right to freedom. In fact, they staged a street demonstration in large numbers without wearing face masks and refused to use

hand sanitizers as a sign of protest. To them, protecting their individual rights is more crucial than the mass spreading of the COVID-19 virus. On the other hand, the people of Asia are more compliant because they value the common good and not just the interests of the individual. This may also be due to the traditional and religious beliefs in Asia that place more importance on community-orientation compared to the Western culture which prioritises secularism and individualism.

The fifth largest manufacturer of health products such as gloves, face masks, and COVID-19 test equipment is located in Asia such as China, Vietnam, and Malaysia. This advantage benefits Asian countries because it enables health equipment to be exported and shared. For example, Malaysia as one of the largest glove manufacturers in the world has helped to send the stock of gloves to China during the spread of COVID-19 in January and February. When Malaysia faced the problem of shortage of face masks in March and early April, China as a major face mask manufacturer reciprocated by sending its stock to Malaysia.

In conclusion, COVID-19 is a pandemic that attacks regardless of race, nationality or religion. However, it is very clear that the Asian countries are more resilient and successful in facing it compared to Western societies. Well done and congratulations to the frontline heroes consisting of medical practitioners, security forces, leaders in Malaysia and rest of Asia!

Endnotes

¹ <https://www.pmo.gov.my> ; Ucapan Perdana Menteri, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, (2020) <https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/nasional/2020/04/673734/ucapan-perdana-menteri-tan-sri-muhyiddin-yassin>. Accessed 15 July 2020.

² COVID-19: Kerjasama 3 kementerian pastikan Malaysia peroleh vaksin, (2020), <https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/nasional/2020/04/679946/covid-19-kerjasama-3-kementerian-pastikan-malaysia-peroleh-vaksin>. Accessed 7 July 2020.

³ <https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/-/telephone-conversation-between-honourable-dato-seri-hishammuddin-tun-hussein-minister-of-foreign-affairs-malaysia-and-his-excellency-dr-s-jaisankar-m>. Accessed 13 July 2020.

⁴ Eighty-one Malaysian stranded in Sri Lanka to return home tomorrow, (2020), https://www.bernama.com/en/general/news_covid-19.php?id=1831457. Accessed 17 July 2020.

⁵ <http://mofa.gov.pk/telephone-conversation-between-the-foreign-minister-and-foreign-minister-of-malaysia/>. Accessed 15 July 2020.

⁶ *Kepulauan Rakyat Malaysia yang Terkandas di Luar Negara*, (2020), <https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/-/kepulauan-rakyat-malaysia-yang-terkandas-di-luar-negara>. Accessed 10 July 2020.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/speeches-statements/-/asset_publisher/mN2jZPwqWjGA/content/kenyataan-media-yb-dato-seri-hishammuddin-tun-hussein-inter-ministerial-collaboration-cluster-on-covid-19-vaccine-and-medication-development-through-i?redirect=%2Fweb%2Fguest%2Fspeeches-statements&inheritRedirect=true. Accessed 20 July 2020.

⁹ Covid-19 aid pouring in for Wisma Putra's MDES initiative, (2020), <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2020/04/582783/covid-19-aid-pouring-wisma-putras-mdes-initiative>. Accessed 10 July 2020.

¹⁰ Two Million Protective Mask Sent by Malaysia Arrived to Sarajevo on Wednesday, (2020), <https://www.sarajevotimes.com/two-million-protective-masks-sent-by-malaysia-to-arrive-to-sarajevo-on-wednesday/>. Accessed 22 July 2020.

¹¹ Malaysian PM, Palestine President discusses ties, COVID-19 over phone call, (2020), <https://www.pmo.gov.my/2020/04/malaysian-pm-palestine-president-discusses-ties-covid-19-over-phone-call/>. Accessed 19 July 2020.

Dr. Roy Anthony Rogers Peter Rogers is Senior Lecturer at the Department of International and Strategic Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya.

Understanding the French State of Mind

Syed Nizamuddin Sayed Khassim

France is definitely not a newcomer when it comes to world politics. One also does not stretch the fact too much by saying that it was the French who laid the framework for modern international politics. The diplomatic strategies laid down by Cardinals Mazarin and Richelieu in the early 17th century managed to alter the functioning of international order by putting nation-states as the main player of international politics.

The French are an intellectual lot. The likes of René Descartes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus are put on a similar pedestal, if not higher than those of military and political leaders. It came as no surprise that at the zenith of Paris intellectual height – the world listened

when Paris spoke. While some may have argued that the post-war Intellectuals have lost its chutzpah – the intellectual DNA of France, long embedded within its psyche remains, even if it is dormant.

An ancient and avid player in world politics, France internalised this image and subsequently believe in its own propensity as the world's philosopher. The intermingling of philosophy, self-identity and national interest within France's foreign policy should come as no surprise. Since the dawn of the Enlightenment, French philosophers from Descartes to Camus spewed ideas which are in essence universal, but unashamedly French in flavour. Ernest Lavisse once noted that "while Rome's mission had been to conquer the world

and Germany's mission was to harness the power of all things Germanic, (France) is charged with representing the cause of humanity".

This desire to preach a 'universalist message' became second nature to the French polity ever since the days of the kings. These messages may vary between Kings and Presidents: Catholicism, republican values, 'civilisation' and human rights are among the values preached by France through the ages. This tradition continues until today, where President Emmanuel Macron relied on France's long history to build its own foreign policy narrative. This time, it chose to preach the gospel of multilateralism. However, a country with long and conflicting history like



France has many traditions to choose from: either the pacifist left to the more assertive right.

Quo vadis, Macron?

Over the years, it became clear that President Macron's foreign policy is eventually a reflection of his own centrist approach. His right-wing belief in nuclear-deterrent mixed with a healthy dose of American scepticism and interventionist policy in Africa was conveniently enmeshed with the leftist global governance and development assistance to the developing countries. But most importantly – they are all French in character and reasoning, i.e. they are done with intellectual fervour and reasoning.

Macron's position on the idea of European unity epitomised how France sees itself in a new multilateral order. Far from seeing the European Union as a threat that would submerge France's identity and capacity, Macron sees it as a key to maintaining French sovereignty. Drumming the idea of European defence, he sees that it is essential for France – along with Europe to part ways on several aspects with the United States and make their own mark in a multipolar world. In this multipolar world, France sees itself as the leader of the European bloc.

While the European Union may have been a geographical convenience to some – to the French polity, the idea of European Unity goes beyond the unity of the inhabitants of a designated physical terrain. To the French polity, it means synchronising the European worldviews. French intelligentsias have rightfully pointed out that 'French ideas' have formed the template worldview of European countries for ages. From the days of Louis XIV to the epoch of the Enlightenment – the French language was the language of the elites, while its culture set the tempo for the rest of the European continent. French ideas and ideals are highly attractive to the rest of Europe; may they be royals, the bourgeoisies, or the proletariats.

The European Union – conceived in the city of Paris – reflects the appeal of French ideas. From the ashes of the Second World War – and when the world was torn between capitalistic right of Anglo-America and the Soviet left: Jean Monnet, an economist and politician who was groomed with the intellectual tradition of the Paris Left Bank found the European Common Market, a third way between communism and capitalism that paved the way to the European Union.

It isn't just the government and the political class that are enraptured by French ideas – even the Western European general distrust towards the establishment or the government can be traced back to Descartes. Cartesian scepticism, now embedded within the French psyche served as the cornerstone of the notion of "civic distrust," which fostered a critical attitude on the part of citizens toward their rulers. French radical and insurrectionary traditions became the template and ideal of a democratic society.

Within the international arena, we can see these elements come into play. Post-war France has always maintained a "civic distrust" of superpowers while preserving its prestige. This De Gaullean doctrine evolved according to the Presidency but remained as a standard French foreign policy template. France, whether the government or its intellectuals have long detested the idea of submitting itself to the US' dominance.

The same pattern can be observed in President Macron's foreign policy. His constant insistence of being independent from the United States with regard to its defence is an echo of De Gaulle's American-skepticism. The Paris Peace Forum, which marked the centenary of the end of the First World War also traced the same outline left by De Gaulle, who aspired to lead a large group of non-aligned countries, built on the idea of multilateralism.

Challenges and Opportunities to Malaysia's Bilateral Relations

Herein lies Malaysia's challenge in addressing France's leadership within the emerging multipolar world. As a country built from the ashes of the British Empire – our diplomatic weltanschauung as a state is very much shaped by knowledge derived from the English speaking world, fused with our history of non-alliance and Islamic solidarity. With this background, we are faced with an uphill task of understanding the French worldview – let alone its paradoxes.

Regardless, therein lies the opportunities that Malaysia must grasp vis-à-vis the French leadership of the EU in a multipolar world. Malaysia can move beyond the context of defence and education with regard to its bilateral relationship with France. Indeed, dozens of opportunities could be listed down but for the purpose of this essay – I will limit it to two areas of exploration.

Aside from the obvious mutually active participation in multilateral fora, one of the probable areas of exploration is archaeology. For the past 70 years, France has made archaeology one of its diplomatic instruments. Based on the premise of knowledge and skills transfers and continuous training of local, young archaeologists – France successfully maintained its prestige as the protector of global heritage. Many might not know this but Malaysia too boast its own archaeological heritage that could benefit from France's active role in supporting worldwide archaeological activities. The Sungai Batu archaeological site, once the centre of Kedah Tua civilisation upended other sites in Southeast Asia as the cradle of earliest civilisation in the region deserves such attention. Believed to have existed since 535 BC, Sungai Batu was once a thriving international entrepôt, an iron smelting hub, as well as a religious centre. The ancient port city boasted 17 smelting plants, 13 administrative centres, numerous ritual sites, 10 jetties and 50 *candis* or ritual sites. Archeologists have also confirmed that the Sungai Batu archaeological site is far older than Cambodia's Angkor Wat and Indonesia's Borobudur. Yet despite its significance, the Sungai Batu

archaeological site remains invisible to the rest of the world, including France. Struggling with resources and technical support, our archaeologists and the French technical expertise could definitely exchange invaluable knowledge through a joint platform built to preserve the Sungai Batu heritage.

Second area of confluence is culture. With advice from Jacques Rigaud, former Director of the French Minister of Culture – France develops an egalitarian posture with regard to cultural diplomacy, particularly with regard to cultural exchange. In short – it is no longer solely about the spread of French culture, but also about showcasing other cultures in France. This opens up an interesting avenue for other countries to deepen their relations with France. Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia are known to capitalise on this aspect of diplomacy. Japan for example, invested billions of Euros to showcase different facades of its culture in France throughout the year – with the opening graced by the presence of the then-Crown Prince Naruhito in 2018. Indonesia invested in gamelan classes at the Philharmonie de Paris,

simultaneously conducting Bahasa Indonesia classes at its embassy. Even Singapore made a point to conduct annual exhibitions in France, including a Baba Nyonya showcase at the esteemed Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac. South Korea boasts a Korean Culture Centre in the middle of Paris. The reason for this is that Paris is the cultural capital of the world, and perceptions towards a country are formed by how one recognises a nation's culture. Malaysia has a lot to learn from this dimension and needs to stop looking at investments in cultural propagation through the myopic lense of dollars and cents.

Beyond palm oil and rubber, the French public knows almost nothing about Malaysia or her people. While our Embassy can participate in minor cultural events – our efforts are easily outweighed by the huge budget allocated by other countries to their respective embassies. For comparison purposes, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs allocate a huge part of its 4.7 billion Euros budget to cultural, networking endeavours, and foreign aids. It would be a parlour game

to dream a similar amount of budget for our cultural diplomacy, but it is worth ruminating how much further we could go if more could be given to showcase our culture and heritage abroad.

In essence, moving our relationship beyond the transactional trade and defence dimension would make it possible for the two countries to understand one another closely. In the emerging multipolar world, it becomes more important for us to have more close friends on the global stage. France is definitely one of its friends that Malaysia ought to lean closer to, but it is definitely difficult to get close without knowing one another intimately. As the Malay saying goes, *tak kenal maka tak cinta*. It may be awkward at first as we find the common rhythm, but over time – one would realise that it is not too difficult to understand the Gallic temperament. C'est comme ça, alors!

Syed Nizamuddin Sayed Khassim currently serves at the Embassy of Malaysia, Paris, France.



Meeting with Ambassador Frederic La Planche, Ambassador of France to Malaysia

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in the Forum section are entirely the authors' own and not those of the Institute.



Engagement with the American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), 13 July



Briefing on Economic Development of Malacca by Mr. Muhammad Shahrul Hafidz Ab Rahim, 25-26 July



Group Photography with Dato' Sri Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob, 27 August



Briefing Session by the Malaysia-China Chambers of Commerce (MCCC), 20 July



DiD 2020 Participants at Mudtrekker Paintball Park, Shah Alam, 28 August



Visit to United Nation Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) at Subang, 14 August



Symbolic Tree Planting Ceremony by Ms. Hafizah Abdullah, Director of Centre for Competency Enhancement (CEC), 25 July



Discussion Session by Dato' Mohd Zamruni Khalid, Director General of IDFR, 15 July



Five DiD Participants Paying a Courtesy Visit on Mr. Luis Cacho Lopez de la Calzada, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Spain in Kuala Lumpur, 16 July



Session on Preparation for Defending National Interest, 26 August



Master Chef Challenge with Dato' Chef Ismail Ahmad, 12 August



Panel Discussion on Malaysia's Relations with Asia (Southeast Asia and East Asia) and the Oceania, 24 August



Drafting of UN Resolution by Mr. Zahid Rastam and Ms. Syuhada Adnan, 18-19 August



DiD Participants at Kelab Golf Titiwangsa PDRM, 21 August

Diploma in Diplomacy: Breakfast Talk

Title of the Talk: Priorities of Management Services in Foreign Affairs

Speaker: Datuk Rahimi Harun

Diploma in Diplomacy (DiD) 2020 participants attended a Breakfast Talk with Datuk Rahimi Harun, Deputy Secretary General of Management Services, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia on 27 July 2020 at VIP Dining Hall, IDFR, Kuala Lumpur.

The Breakfast Talk was organised by the Competency Enhancement Centre (CEC) and the DiD 2020 participants. Dato' Mohd Zamruni Khalid, Director General of IDFR, Heads of Centre of IDFR as well as officials from CEC were also in attendance.

During the Breakfast Talk, Datuk Rahimi highlighted three important priorities of the management services. Firstly, the importance of the adherence to the set rules and regulations in order to



deliver the best services to the people. Secondly, the importance of providing effective and efficient services to the Ministry's stakeholders. Finally, the importance of upskilling the officers (in diplomatic skills and foreign languages) in the Ministry and Missions abroad.

Datuk Rahimi also took the opportunity to underscore the vital role of Management Services Department, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The setting-

up of an operation room at the Ministry had enabled the Ministry to address the urgent need of ensuring the wellbeing and the safety of Malaysians abroad.

Indeed, the Malaysian Missions abroad had coordinated many repatriation flights to bring back Malaysians home safely. As of date, the Government has successfully brought home more than 20,000 Malaysians stranded in 82 countries due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Department of Management Services oversees matters on Administration and Security; Information and Communication Technology; Finance; Human Resource Management; Inspectorate Development; and Account.

Diploma in Diplomacy: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Programme in Malacca

Competency Enhancement Centre (CEC) and Diploma in Diplomacy (DiD) 2020 participants organised a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme in Malacca from 25 to 26 July 2020.

The main objective of the CSR programme is to raise awareness on sustainable forest management and development in line with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal No. 15 'Life on Land'.

The CSR Programme commenced with a briefing by Mr. Syahir Afizi Abd Aziz, Forest Assistant, Department of Forestry Malacca on Malaysia's forest diversity and forest preservation efforts. He highlighted Malacca's effort in preserving its rainforest's rich biodiversity through the various initiatives.

Subsequently, the CEC officials and the

DiD 2020 participants planted 14 Meranti Seraya trees and 15 Chengal trees. A Merbau tree was specially planted to officiate the CSR programme at Malacca Botanical Garden. The program was witnessed by Ms. Norliza Md., Deputy Director of Forestry and officials from the Department of Forestry of Malacca.

In the afternoon, the participants were briefed on Malacca's economic development with special focus on the state's economic recovery plan post COVID-19. Mr. Muhammad Shahrul Hafidz Ab Rahim, Principal Assistant Secretary, Malacca State Economic Planning Unit also shared the state's success stories in promoting foreign investment into Malacca including the latest development in several of its mega projects such as the Malacca Waterfront Economic Zone, Kuala Linggi

International Port, and the High-Speed Rail Project. He also encouraged the participants to help promote Malacca as one of the foreign investors' destinations.

Overall, the DiD 2020 participants have developed greater awareness on Malaysia's forest reserve and sustainable forest management through the CSR programme and increased their knowledge on the importance of foreign direct investment to the state's economic growth and prosperity.



Diploma in Diplomacy: Briefing Session by the Malaysia-China Chambers of Commerce (MCCC)

The Diploma in Diplomacy (DiD) 2020 participants visited the Malaysia-China Chambers of Commerce (MCCC) office on 20 July 2020. The participants were received by Dato' Joseph Lim Heng Ee, Vice President of the MCCC and his officials.

In his presentation, Dato' Joseph Lim elaborated on MCCC's major role in connecting the businesses between Malaysia and China. Founded in 1990, MCCC was established as a non-governmental, non-profit, multi-ethnic, and independent business association that promotes interaction, cooperation, and development in businesses, trade, and investment between Malaysia and China stakeholder. Dato' Joseph Lim highlighted that China remains Malaysia's largest trading partner, followed by Singapore and the US. In 2019, Malaysia-China bilateral trade reached



the record high of USD124 billion.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, MCCC was of the view that with the rapid development of digitisation, Malaysia and China can continue to prosper through proper economic integration under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Dato' Joseph Lim added that the deepening cooperation in various fields will bring about a win-win outcome and benefit for the future generations.

During the interactive session, MCCC

emphasised that the appointment of a Prime Minister's Special Envoy to China has helped to foster closer relations between Putrajaya and Beijing, particularly in opening up more business opportunities and joint ventures. MCCC highlighted the appointment of a Special Envoy has ensured that business events across China would be represented at a higher level of representation.

In his closing remarks, Dato' Joseph Lim expressed MCCC's appreciation for the cooperation and support from the Embassy of Malaysia in Beijing, the People's Republic of China as well as all Consulate Generals of Malaysia in China. He wished the DiD 2020 participants success in their future postings abroad and looked forward to continually engaging with future Malaysian diplomats.

Diploma in Diplomacy: Engagement with the American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM)



The Diploma in Diplomacy (DiD) 2020 participants visited the American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) on 13 July 2020 to gain insight into the role and functions of AMCHAM.

The briefing was conducted by Ms.

Sobhian Das, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of AMCHAM. In her presentation, Ms. Sobhian briefed that AMCHAM has been the "Voice of US Business in Malaysia" since 1978 and comprises of more than 1200 members representing about 280 American, Malaysian, and other

international companies. Its members also work closely with the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and other Ministries and agencies on a range of policy related issues.

Following the briefing, the DiD 2020 participants had an interactive session with the CEO of AMCHAM on various issues, including AMCHAM's strategy to attract business and investment during the Movement Control Order (MCO) and post-COVID 19.

The engagement session between the DiD 2020 participants and the AMCHAM was timely as it helped the participants understand better AMCHAM's important role in generating economic growth in Malaysia.

Webinar on “COVID-19: Best Government Practices in Malaysia and the UAE”

On 10 August 2020, IDFR, in collaboration with Rabdan Academy, a leading educational institution specialising in security, defence, and emergency preparedness in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), organised a virtual discussion seminar focusing on the experiences and best practices of both countries in managing and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The webinar, entitled “COVID-19: Best Government Practices in Malaysia and the UAE”, covered three major themes; policing system, healthcare, and international relations. It also highlighted the diplomatic relation between Malaysia and the UAE and was moderated by Dr. Shamma Al Naqbi, Program Chair for Foundation and General Education.

Opening the session, H.E. Sultan Mohammed Al Shamsi, Assistant Minister for International Development Affairs, stressed on the need to move forward together by sharing expertise and knowledge on best practices in facing not just the COVID-19 pandemic but also future crises. He said that the existing collaboration is important and strengthens the international relations between both countries to face this challenge. On a related note, Dato' Kamarudin Jaffar, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that knowledge sharing between the Malaysian and UAE governments would be necessary for both countries in preparation for future crises. He added that the initiative to organise the seminar is an impetus for meaningful future relations and deeper cooperation between the two countries and expressed his hope that this will pave the way for more similar collaborations between Malaysia and the UAE.

The webinar featured keynote speakers such as Colonel Abdulrahman Ali Al Mansouri, Director General of Ministry Affairs at the Ministry of Interior and DCP Dato' Ramli Mohamed Yoosuf, Secretary of Royal Malaysia Police, who spoke on the issue of policing system in addressing COVID-19



pandemic. Spokespersons from both countries shared how law enforcement officers operate and enforce law and order as well as dispersing crowds and gatherings. Both speakers also agreed that government policies related to COVID-19 should be clearly communicated to all law enforcement officers. Additionally, they elaborated on the role of law enforcement in informing the public about the current restrictions and encouraging individuals to comply with the state and local emergency health declarations.

looking forward for more collaboration with the Malaysian government in future and added that learning from each other will enable both countries to succeed in any future challenge. In her presentation, Dr. Wan Noraini Wan Mohamed Noor, Head of Surveillance Sector, Disease Control Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia, outlined six key strategic approaches that Malaysia has adopted in the fight against COVID-19. They are surveillance and public health intervention, diagnostic and testing, Movement Control Order (MCO), evidence-based approach/WHO guidelines, risk communication, and isolation and treatment. She also mentioned the vital role played by the National Security Council (NSC), an agency under the Prime Minister's Department and headed by the Prime Minister, in coordinating Malaysia's response to COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Wan Noraini then shared the Malaysian roadmap to fight COVID-19 which are working together to adopt the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, putting in continuous



With regard to the health care system of both countries in responding to COVID-19, Dr. Farida Al Hosaini, the official spokesperson for healthcare sector in the UAE, praised the strategic relations between Malaysia and UAE in producing successful efforts and responses in containing the spread of COVID-19. She said that the UAE is

effort towards reducing the morbidity and mortality due to COVID-19, and providing continuous reminder about how everyone must play his/her part in practising the new normal.

With reference to diplomacy and international relations in addressing COVID-19 pandemic, Mohamed

Al-Qurtasi, Director of Operations Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, said that the COVID-19 pandemic presents an era defining challenge to public health and the global economy. It is imperative for both countries to cooperate in more knowledge sharing, more global cooperation, and therefore a global concerted effort. On a similar note, Datuk Wan Zaidi Wan Abdullah, Chief of Protocol cum Head of COVID-19 Task Force, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that international collaboration, strong

relationships, and effective diplomacy are essential to overcome this crisis. He further added that both countries have done remarkable and distinguished work in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, he said, had facilitated the return of 12,000 Malaysian citizens who were stuck abroad and succeeded in bringing them home through evacuation trips, in addition to the assistance that Malaysia worked for with the international community as well as with the UAE, to overcome the pandemic

and its effects.

On the whole, the webinar reflected the close bilateral relationship between Malaysia and the UAE. Both countries agreed to learn from each other to combat the global spread of COVID-19. The seminar managed to attract the participation of 250 officials, decision-makers, and experts in ministries and government institutions from the two countries.

International Negotiation Course for Junior Level Officer



Negotiation is a method by which people settle differences, search for other alternatives, as well as discuss further in achieving win-win objectives. It is a process where compromise or agreement is reached while avoiding argument and dispute. In any disagreement, individuals understandably aim to achieve the best possible outcome for their position or perhaps an organisation they represent. However, the principles of fairness, seeking mutual benefit, and maintaining a relationship are the keys to a successful outcome.

IDFR successfully hosted the *International Negotiation Course for Junior Level Officers* from 21 to 23 July 2020. This course was specially designed for the junior officers from grade 41 to 44 in developing their negotiation, self-confidence, and effective communication skills. This course was attended by 31 participants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Prime Minister's Department, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Royal Police of Malaysia, and Malaysia Palm Oil Board. Ms. Shanta Nagendram, Principal Consultant of SkillFocus Consultancy was invited to conduct the course held at the Dorsett Hotel, Kuala Lumpur.

The course aimed to expose the participants to the negotiation skills in the global setting, as well as share the experiences and the advanced knowledge on international negotiations. This course can also be deployed as an additional knowledge for the participants before they will be directly involved in any negotiating exercises in representing their organisation in the international platform. Mr. Istaq Nadzril Abd Kader, Director of ASEAN Political and Security Community, the ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also invited to deliver his lecture on *Personal Experience in International Negotiation*.

In order to achieve a desirable outcome, it may be useful to follow a structured approach to negotiation. For example, in a work situation a meeting may need to be arranged in which all parties involved can come together. Participants were exposed to the process of negotiation which includes several stages of

preparing, discussing, clarifying goals, negotiating towards a win-win outcome, agreement, and implementing courses of action. They were also introduced to the concept of BATNA – the best alternative to a negotiated agreement. A successful negotiator should also be more sensible over cultural, social, and ethical issues while discussing over differences.

Dato' Mohd Zamruni Khalid, Director General of IDFR accompanied by Mr. Hamizan Hashim, Director of LNPD, delivered his closing remarks and presented the certificates to the participants during the closing ceremony on the last day of the course.

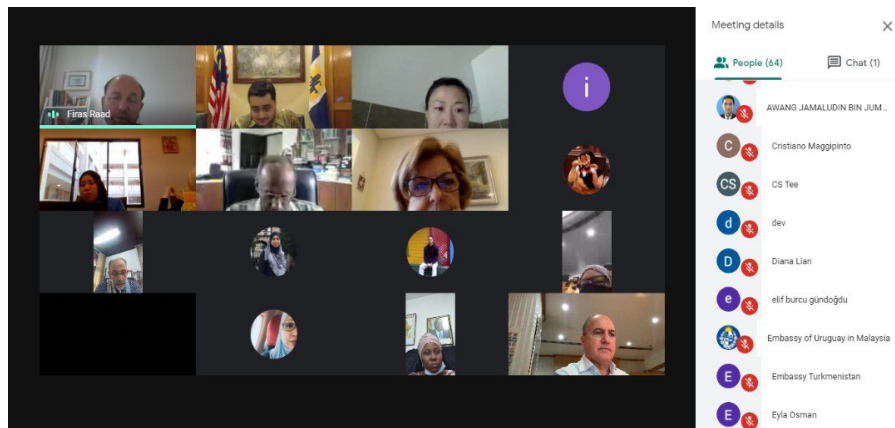
Economic Diplomacy Series 1/2020

Title of the Lecture: Malaysia and COVID-19: From Lockdown to Economic Recovery

Speaker: Dr. Firas Raad

Economic Diplomacy Series 1/2020 was held on 9 July 2020. The fruitful and informative session was presented by Dr. Firas Raad, Country Manager for Malaysia, East Asia and Pacific, World Bank Group on the topic of *Malaysia and COVID-19: From Lockdown to Economic Recovery*. The Economic Diplomacy Series, usually conducted twice a year, aims to provide a platform for knowledge and information sharing on current issues and gauge the understanding of their impact on Malaysia's economy.

As we are currently in an unprecedented crisis: which is the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Firas' lecture focused on several key points; the global economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and Malaysia's public health response. He then further explained the impact on the Malaysian economy, economic support measures and recovery plan, the outlook for economic growth as well as the laying of foundations for structural changes.



Dr. Firas described that in the first quarter of 2020, the world faced a supply and demand shock that had resulted in a synchronised collapse of global economic activity which then led to the simultaneous lockdown across the world. Only those deemed as essential services were allowed to operate in Malaysia to minimise physical contact, the country then slowly saw a decline in positive cases as it enters the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) period which would last till

31 August 2020, although being the highest number of infected cases in Southeast Asia in the beginning.

During the lecture, Dr. Firas applauded the Malaysian government for successfully mounting an effective public health response, which was its major priority right from the beginning. He added that Malaysia's hospital system was not threatened by being overwhelmed with patients that contracted the virus. However, he cautioned that the people must still be vigilant and mindful of the possibility of resurgence of cases. He further explained that Malaysia is currently making a comeback on recovering the economy as compared to several Southeast Asian countries based on the exponential graph of Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI).

The session was held via Google Meet and participated by various party representatives from, among others, ministries, foreign missions, universities, think tanks, and financial institutions as well as students from IDFR's Diploma in Diplomacy programme.



News Contributors

Norlela Samad, Ezrin Balqis Abd Lataf, Johan Arief Jaafar, Fatin Zafirah Haris, Maisarah Ariffin, Haris Azman, Nur Atiqah Md Akim, Amirul Khairi Mustafa Bakri



Courtesy Call by H.E. Ary Norton de Murat Quintella, Ambassador of Brazil to Malaysia, 17 August



DID Participants' Visit to United Nation Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) at Subang, 14 August



Fundamentals of English Language for Administrative Assistants of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 July



Among the Participants at the Presentation Skills for the Workplace Course, 10-13 August,



IDFR Lecture Series 1/2020, 6 August



Lets Share Session@IDFR, 13 July



Datuk Wan Zaidi Wan Abdullah, Chief of Protocol, at Webinar on "COVID-19: Best Government Practices in Malaysia and the UAE", 10 August



International Negotiation Course for Junior Level Officers, 21-23 July



Participants of Advanced Diploma (Level 3) in Teaching, Training and Assessing Learning (TETRA)



Courtesy Call by Tan Sri Razali Ismail and Datuk Kenneth Luis from the United Nations Association Malaysia (UNAM), 26 June



Associate Professor Dr. Norraihan Zakaria's Session with DiD 2020 Participants, 14 July



Webinar on "EU Governance and Policies", 24 July



Breakfast Talk with Datuk Rahimi Harun, Deputy Secretary General of Management Services, 27 July



Farewell Celebration for Mr. Mohd Suhaimi Ahmad Tajuddin, Director, Competency Enhancement Centre (CEC), 6 July



Master Chef Challenge Among DiD Participants, 12 August



Visit to the Malaysian Spanish Chamber of Commerce & Industry (La Camara), 16 July



Dato' Sri Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob, at Dinner Talk, 27 August



DiD Participants Visited Mini Malaysia and ASEAN Cultural Park, 26 July



Breakfast Session with Dato' Mohd Zamruni Khalid, Director General of IDFR, 1 July



Group Photography with Datuk Rahimi Harun, Deputy Secretary General of Management Services, 27 July



Tunku Zain Al-Abidin, Founding President of IDEAS, at IDFR Lecture Series 1/2020, 6 August



IDFR Lecture Series 1/2020



International Negotiation Course for Junior Level Officers, 21-23 July