



# NEWSLETTER

EMBASSY OF MALAYSIA TO THE HOLY SEE

JAN - JUN 2020 | 1ST ISSUE 2020

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Message from His Excellency Westmoreland Palon
- Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings between the Holy Father and the Diplomatic Corp
- Malaysia's contribution towards Albania's recovery efforts following the devastating earthquake in November 2019
- Meeting with Archbishop Ian Ernest, the Archbishop of Canterbury's new Personal Representative to the Holy See & Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome
- Visit by Secretary General of the Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources
- A Very Warm Welcome to Father George Harrison
- *Responding to COVID-19*
  - Pope Called for Joint Prayer to End the Coronavirus
  - Malaysia's Diplomatic Equipment Stockpile (MDES)
  - Repatriation of Malaysian Citizens and their dependents from the Holy See and Italy to Malaysia
- A Fond Farewell to Mr Mohd Shaifuddin bin Daud and family
- Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri & Selamat Hari Gawai
- Post-Lockdown Gathering with Malaysians at the Holy See



## Message From His Excellency Westmoreland Palon

It gives me great pleasure to present you the latest edition of the Embassy's newsletter for the first half of 2020. It has certainly been a very challenging year so far for everyone. The coronavirus pandemic has put a halt to many activities with cancellations and postponements of planned programmes and events.

In compliance with nationwide measures to restrict travel and public gatherings imposed by the Italian government, St. Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museums were closed to public, and all public celebration of Masses and liturgies have been suspended in an effort to curb the spread of the virus. With restrictions in place over the Easter weekend, people marked the most important time in the Church's calendar in the comfort of their own home. The Easter Sunday Mass was held in an almost empty St. Peter's Basilica and live streamed across the world and Christians were invited to participate in spirit.

In Malaysia, we are thankful that the number of infections have been kept in check. In general, Malaysia has been quite successful in keeping the virus at bay thanks to its preparedness from past experiences, strong government role including a multi-stakeholder approach, as well as a robust healthcare system. As difficult as it may be, it is important for us to make the necessary adjustments to adapt to the 'new normal' in the way we work and live our lives where 'social distancing', wearing of face masks and working from home have become the norm. While we are unable to meet in person, we remain connected through virtual meetings and conferences.

After months of lockdown since March, we are relieved and thankful that the situation has improved. With gradual easing of restrictive measures, shops and restaurants are back in business. The Vatican Museum has reopened its doors to visitors, and cathedrals, churches and houses of worship too have welcomed the faithful once again.

St. Peter's Square, once deserted, is slowly coming back to life now that Italy is welcoming visitors from neighbouring countries.

Nonetheless, we still need to be cautious. If we all continue to do our part to help flatten the curve and stop the spread of the virus, we can look forward to a safer and brighter second half of the year. The Embassy takes this opportunity to thank all the front-liners and healthcare workers for their sacrifice and commitments in caring for the sick and keeping everyone safe.

Stay Safe



**"In Malaysia, we are thankful that the number of infections have been kept in check." "Nonetheless, we still need to be cautious. If we all continue to do our part to help flatten the curve and stop the spread of the virus, we can look forward to a safer and brighter second half of the year."**

# Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings between the Holy Father and the Diplomatic Corps

Vatican City, 9 January 2020

The New Year was ushered in grand tradition and ceremony with the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings between the Holy Father and the Diplomatic Corps in the magnificent Apostolic Palace.

The Ambassador was accompanied by his wife, as well as, embassy official Mr Karunanithi Ranoo at the ceremony, where the ambassador personally conveyed His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's warm greetings and best wishes for the New Year to Pope Francis.

**"A new year is opening before us; like the cry of a newborn baby, it fills us with joy and hope."**

***Pope Francis***



At the ceremony, the Ambassador and members of the Diplomatic Corps also exchanged greetings with His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State, as well as other senior officials of the Secretariat of State of the Roman Curia.



## Malaysia's contribution towards Albania's recovery efforts following the devastating earthquake in November 2019

Rome, 21 January 2020

**A**lbania was rocked by a strong earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4 early on Tuesday morning, 26 November 2019. It is considered the most powerful earthquake to have hit Albania in the last 40 years. The last severe earthquake to hit Albania was in 1979. The earthquake's epicenter was 30 km (19 miles) west of Tirana. The Albanian government announced a State of Emergency on Wednesday, 27 November 2019 following the earthquake. The cost of recovery is estimated to be over a billion euros. As a sign of solidarity with the people of Albania, Malaysia provided financial aid towards the recovery and reconstruction efforts in Albania.

**"Albania was rocked by a strong earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4 early on Tuesday morning, 26 November 2019."**

His Excellency Westmoreland Palon, who is also accredited to the Republic of Albania, presented Malaysia's contribution

towards Albania's recovery efforts to Her Excellency Anila Bitri, Ambassador of Albania to the Republic of Italy in Rome on 21 January 2020.



## Meeting with Archbishop Ian Ernest, the Archbishop of Canterbury's new Personal Representative to the Holy See & Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome

Rome, 21 January 2020



**H**is Excellency Westmoreland Palon met with Archbishop Ian Ernest, the Archbishop of Canterbury's new Personal Representative to the Holy See & Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome at the Embassy. Archbishop Ian took up his role in Rome following an official Papal Visit to Mauritius by Pope Francis in September 2019, prior to which he was Bishop of Mauritius and Primate of the Anglican Church of the Indian Ocean. They spoke on ecumenism, Christian Unity & the Centre's work.

The Anglican Centre in Rome was founded in 1966 following the first public meeting between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury since the Reformation. The Centre was charged with a new relationship of friendship and understanding between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church.

# Visit by Secretary General of the Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources

Vatican City, 25 February 2020

The Ambassador was pleased to receive a visit to the Embassy by Y.Bhg. Datuk Zurinah Binti Pawanteh, the Secretary General of the then-Ministry of Water, Land and Mineral Resources (now Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources) of Malaysia on Tuesday, 25 January 2020.

The Secretary General was in Rome to attend the second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group established by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the FAO. While in Rome, the Secretary General took the opportunity to visit the Vatican.

During the meeting, the Secretary General and the Ambassador discussed and shared

views on Malaysia's strong commitment to conserve its biodiversity and natural environment, in line with Pope Francis' encyclical letter Laudato Si on care for our common home.

**"Malaysia has only 0.2% of the world land mass, its biodiversity of flora and fauna species makes it one of the richest countries in the world in terms of biodiversity per unit area"**



# A Very Warm Welcome to Father George Harrison

Vatican City, 3 March 2020

**H**is Excellency Westmoreland Palon was pleased to welcome Father George Harrison from Malaysia, who was recently appointed to serve in the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development under the Roman Curia in the Vatican. Prior to his appointment in early January this year, Father George Harrison served as the Parish Priest at the Church of the Visitation in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan for four and a half years. In conjunction with the 72nd birthday of the Yang Dipertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan, Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Munawir at Istana Besar in Seri Menanti on January 14, Father George was also awarded the Darjah Setia Negeri Sembilan (DSN) for his contributions to the state as Parish Priest of the Church.

During his tenure in Seremban, the Church organised interfaith events and activities in the community fostering unity and harmony. Tuanku Mukhriz viewed the Church of the Visitation as ‘a beacon of unity and harmony standing in the Main Street of Seremban’.

The Embassy warmly welcomes Father George to the Vatican and wishes him all the very best in his new appointment in the Dicastery.



**M**r. Arvinanto Soeriaatmadja, Counsellor of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia to the Holy See made a farewell call on the Ambassador on 28 January 2020. Pak Arvinanto has been a true friend and collaborator of the Embassy and we wish him the very best in his new assignment back home in Jakarta.



**O**n 19 February 2020, the Ambassador was pleased to receive a Courtesy Call by Mr. Rogerio Dos Santos, the new Charge d’Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of Timor-Leste to the Holy See. The Embassy warmly welcomes Mr. Dos Santos to Rome and looks forward to continuing our collaboration with Timor-Leste in promoting and pursuing our mutual national interests in the Holy See.



## Responding to COVID-19

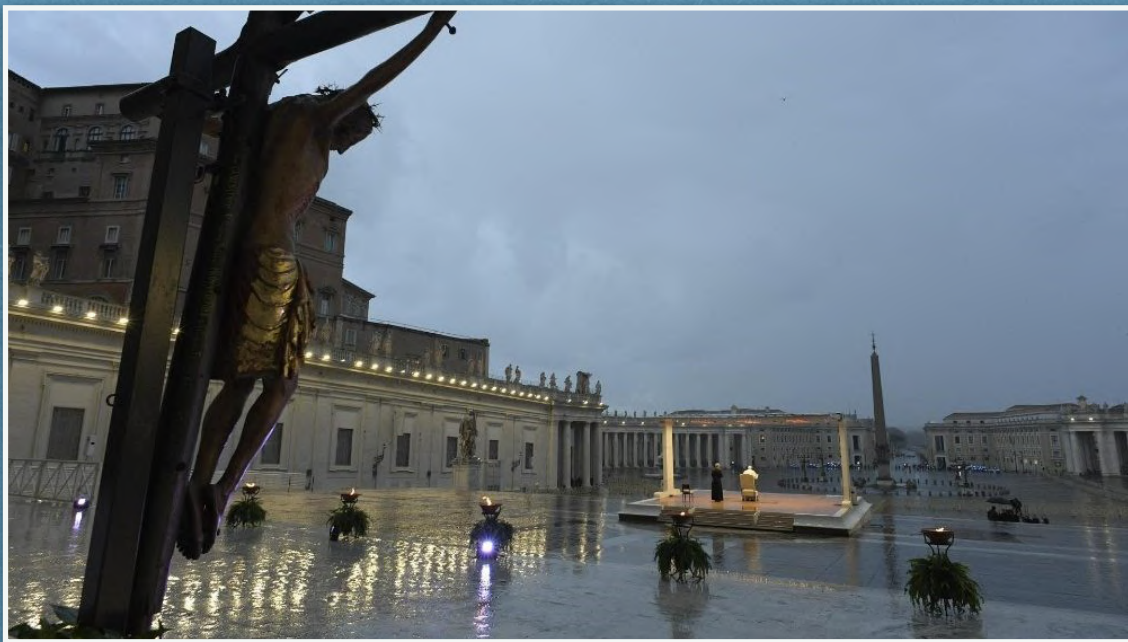
### Pope Called for Joint Prayer to End the Coronavirus

Vatican City, 27 March 2020

**O**n a rainy evening Friday evening in an unusually deserted St. Peter's Square on 27 March 2020, Pope Francis delivered an extraordinary Urbi et Orbi (To the City and to the World) blessing, an event reserved for Easter and Christmas, to pray for an end to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. The Pontiff prayed for the Lord to "bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts".

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mission has been in constant contact with

Malaysians in the Holy See, as well as in Malta and Albania to render the necessary consular assistance and advice. At present, there are twelve Malaysian seminarians, priests and nuns who are either studying or working at the Vatican; whereas there are currently only six Malaysians in Malta and one in Albania. Mission was also in constant communication with other embassies from Asia, including fellow ASEAN Member States - Indonesia and the Philippines, to exchange information and news on the pandemic.



### Malaysia's Diplomatic Equipment Stockpile (MDES)

**M**ission is very grateful to be supplied with face masks, gloves and hand sanitizers from Wisma Putra under the Malaysia's Diplomatic Equipment Stockpile (MDES) initiative. MDES is an initiative that provides the opportunity for all parties, including individuals, companies, corporate bodies, civil society organisations etc., to contribute medical supplies and equipment for use by Wisma Putra front liners currently at home and at 106 diplomatic missions all over the world

Ask us how you could contribute to Wisma Putra front liners

[mdes@kln.gov.my](mailto:mdes@kln.gov.my)

Tel.: +603-8887 4770 (24 hrs)

1601 8010 0314 17

**BANK ISLAM MALAYSIA BERHAD**

Kelab Sukan & Kebajikan Wisma Putra (MDES)

# Repatriation of Malaysian Citizens and their dependents from the Holy See and Italy to Malaysia

Vatican City, 25 March 2020

**A**s Italy was badly hit by the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus, the Malaysian Government made the decision to repatriate Malaysians and their dependents home. The Embassy of Malaysia to the Holy See conducted a joint-operation with the Embassy of Malaysia to the Republic of Italy to ensure the success of the repatriation exercise in March.

Officials from Malawakil Rome and Malawakil Holy See worked hand in hand to provide consular assistance to Malaysians impacted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus, especially students in the northern region of Italy. The Task Force made special transportation arrangements for Malaysians in the northern and other regions to travel to Rome for the repatriation exercise. The Malaysian citizens and their dependents were accommodated at Hotel Mercure Rome Leonardo da Vinci Airport while anxiously waiting for their flight home.

A total of 73 Malaysian citizens and their dependents, as well as 8 Home-Based Staff of the Embassies and their dependents were successfully repatriated to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 25 March 2020 via a special commercial aircraft operated chartered by the Government of Malaysia. We thank the Wisma Putra COVID-19 Task Force, as well as NADMA and MOH for the close coordination and support in making this repatriation a success.



**A**t the airport both YBhg. Dato' Abdul Malik Melvin Castelino and Ambassador Westmoreland Palon were present to see through the smooth check-in of the passengers.



**T**he Ambassador chaired a COVID-19 Task Force coordination meeting at the Embassy with the Ambassador Dato' Abdul Malek Melvin and officials of the Embassy of Malaysia to the Republic of Italy on 6 March 2020.

## A Fond Farewell to Mr Mohd Shaifuddin bin Daud and family

*Vatican City, 29 January 2020*

**M**r Mohd Shaifuddin bin Daud served as the Personal Assistant to the Ambassador and was among the pioneer team assigned to Rome to establish the Embassy of Malaysia to the Holy See in March 2016. Mr Shaifuddin ended his successful tour of duty at the end of January 2020 and returned to Malaysia with his family on 30 January 2020 to take up his new assignment at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia in Putrajaya.

The Embassy organised a farewell party for Mr Shaifuddin and his family on 29 January 2020 and was presented with a memento as a sign of appreciation for his work and contribution to the Embassy by the Ambassador.

Aside from bidding a fond farewell to Mr Shaifuddin, the party also warmly welcomed his successor, Mr Norshidi and his wife, to Rome and to the Embassy.

We wish Mr Shaifuddin and his family all the very best in another new adventure back home in Malaysia.



**"Mr Mohd Shaifuddin bin Daud served as the Personal Assistant to the Ambassador and was among the pioneer team assigned to Rome to establish the Embassy of Malaysia to the Holy See in March 2016."**



## Hari Raya Aidilfitri & Hari Gawai Celebrations

Rome, 24 May 2020

**W**ith the restrictions on large gatherings still enforced, both the Malaysian missions to the Holy See and to Italy had a small gathering of just the embassy officials and family members to celebrate Hari Raya Aidilfitri on the first day of Syawal at the Embassy of Malaysia to Italy. The Ambassador thanks TYT Dato' Abdul Malek Melvin, Ambassador of Malaysia to the Republic of Italy for including us in this joyous occasion.

We look forward to having a bigger celebration with Malaysians and friends in Italy and the Holy See next year.



**"We look forward to having a bigger celebration with Malaysians and friends in Italy and the Holy See next year."**



Rome, 1 June 2020

**T**he Ambassador hosted a small Gawai Dayak celebration at his residence with colleagues and family of both the Malaysian missions to the Holy See on 1 June 2020. We hope to be able to celebrate Pesta Kaamatan and Hari Gawai with our fellow Malaysians and friends in the Holy See and Italy next year.

## Post-Lockdown Gathering with Malaysians at the Holy See

*Vatican City, 26 June 2020*

**A**fter months of lockdown, the Embassy was finally able to organise a small gathering with Malaysian priests, seminarians and nuns who are either studying or working at the Vatican on a warm Friday afternoon, 26 June 2020 at the Embassy. The Embassy was unable to host the annual Easter gathering in April due to the restrictions on travel and a ban on public gathering because of the pandemic. With the easing of the restrictions in June, the Embassy was happy to bring everyone together to catch up and enjoy some Laksa Sarawak. In a way, the gathering was also to celebrate Easter, Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Hari Gawai and Pesta Keamatan all in one.

The Embassy was also happy to have Father Guido Gockel, Procurator General of the Mill Hill Missionaries, joined us for the gathering. Father Guido is no stranger to Malaysia. He came to Sarawak in the early 1970s after he had just been ordained as a Catholic priest and served with the Mill Hill Missionary in Miri and the interiors for about 20 years. Since then he had served in Jerusalem, New York and is now the Procurator General of the Mill Hill Missionary in Rome.

**"The Embassy was also happy to have Father Guido Gockel, Procurator General of the Mill Hill Missionaries, joined us for the gathering."**



## Bon Voyage to Father Simon Lau

**W**e also bade a fond farewell to Father Simon Lau, who had just completed his two-year studies and returned to Malaysia on 28 June 2020. We wish Father Simon all the best in his new mission back in his home town of Sibü.



## The Swiss Guard

The swearing in of the new Swiss Guards recruits is celebrated every year on 6 May. This year, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, it has been postponed to 4 October 2020 and will be held behind closed doors and without guests in accordance with current protection regulations against Covid-19.

Here are some things you (probably) didn't know about the Swiss Guards.

### What is the Swiss Guard?

The Swiss Guard, or "Pontifical Guard", makes up the smallest army in the world, comprised of 135 men who act as the private body guards of the Pope and, together with the "gendarmerie" (the Vatican Police), protect all entrance and exit points of the Vatican and Castel Gandolfo, the pope's summer residence. January 22, 1506 is the official date of the foundation, the day on which 150 Swiss from the Canton of Uri, under the Command of Captain Kaspar von Silenen arrived at the Vatican at the request of Pope Julius II della Rovere.

### Why does the oath of new recruits take place on May 6th?

The date marks the anniversary of the 1527 Sack of Rome, during which the mutinous soldiers of Emperor Charles V overran the Eternal City.

During the attack, 147 Swiss Guards died defending Pope Clement VII, with the remaining guards finally bringing the pontiff to safety through the Passetto di Borgo, a passage leading to Castel Sant'Angelo.

### What are the requirements for joining the Swiss Guard?

To qualify, they must be Swiss Catholic males, between the ages of 19 and 30 and reaching a minimum height requirement of 174 cm (5'8"). They also must have undergone mandatory military service in Switzerland and mustn't be married. Although they are eventually allowed to marry, this is usually only permitted to those over the age of 25 who have reached the rank of Corporal.

### Is it true that the uniform was designed by Michelangelo?

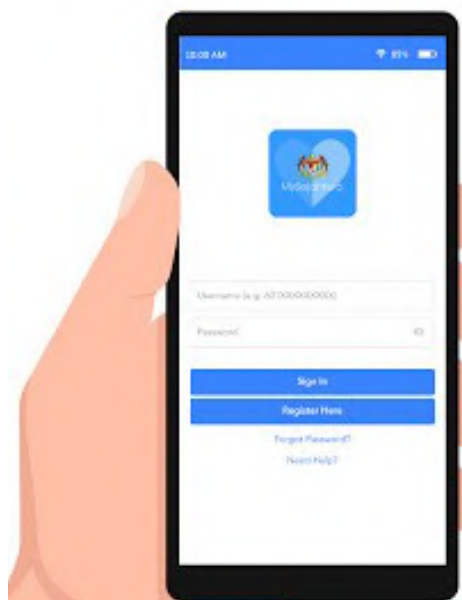
Contrary to popular belief, their uniforms were not designed by Michelangelo or Raphael. The current uniform, in fact, was conceived by the commander Jules Repond in the early twentieth century, inspired by the historical uniforms and the work of Raphael. In particular, the blue and yellow colors are inspired by those contained in the family coat of arms of Pope Julius II della Rovere, the founder of the Corps, while the red color by the coat of arms of Pope Clement VII of the Medici family.



Returning Malaysians and Non-Malaysians with entry permit are advised to download and activate the MySejahtera App prior to your arrival in Malaysia.

# MYSEJAHTERA APP



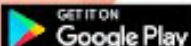

- It was developed by the Malaysian Government to manage the COVID-19 outbreak
- It helps users with health assessment & monitoring



## REGISTRATION STEPS

- Scan the QR Code/visit [mysejahtera.malaysia.gov.my](http://mysejahtera.malaysia.gov.my)
- Key in your mobile phone number/e-mail address
- Click the 'Submit' button to receive a one-time PIN (OTP) code via SMS from MySMS 63839/e-mail
- Key in the OTP & click 'Send'
- Fill up the registration details & click 'Send'. You will receive a 'Successful Registration' message
- Download the MySejahtera app & log in

Download the free app from:

Source: [mysejahtera.malaysia.gov.my](http://mysejahtera.malaysia.gov.my)

Published: 22/4/2020  
Bernama Infographics





**Embassy of Malaysia to the Holy See**  
Ambasciata della Malesia presso la Santa Sede

**Contact Us**



Via della Conciliazione 4D  
Int. 2, Secondo Piano  
00193 Rome, Italy



mwholysee@kln.gov.my



+39 06 6830 8432



+39 06 6821 6166



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