

Essentially Premised on Both The Internal and External Political, Security And Socio-Economic Environments

Strategically positioned in the heart of Southeast Asia, Malaysia is an example of a successful multi-ethnic and multi-religious polity. The Federation of Malaya became an independent country on Aug. 31, 1957. On Sept. 16, 1963 the federation was enlarged by the accession of the states of Singapore, Sabah (formerly British North Borneo) and Sarawak. The name "Malaysia" was adopted from that date. However, Singapore left the federation on Aug. 9, 1965.

Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy. It is a Federation of 13 states and 3 federal territories with a constitutional monarch, His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as the Supreme Head of the country. Executive authority is also vested in the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and exercised by a cabinet of ministers headed by the Prime Minister. The Federal Constitution clearly demarcates the separation of powers among the country's Legislative, Judicial and Executive Authorities.

Malaysia has enjoyed a climate of political stability which has brought with it a high level of economic growth based on diversification of the economy, especially through industrialization and stimulated by foreign investment. The National Front Coalition led by Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad won a fifth term in office in the country's 10th general elections held on Nov. 29, 1999, winning 148 of the 193 elected seats in Parliament.

Malaysia's foreign policy is essentially premised on both the internal and external political, security and socio-economic environments. The country's international approach is guided by the basic objective of seeking friendship for purposes of securing mutually beneficial relations. A peaceful and stable political security environment in the region is essential to the progress and prosperity of the country.

Malaysia remains firmly committed to intensifying regional cooperation, primarily by building upon existing ASEAN cooperation as well as enhancing cooperation with extra-regional countries, in-

cluding between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners.

In this context, Malaysia has taken and continues to take a proactive role in three main foreign policy areas: cementing bilateral relations, fostering regional cooperation and active participation in various multilateral events. In the latter area, Malaysia's contributions lie in South-South Cooperation, the Organization of Islamic Conference, North-South relations, the United Nations Security Council and the Commonwealth Group of Countries.

Malaysia's foreign policy is as an extension of domestic policy, designed for defending and promoting the country's national security, economic and other vital interests. Since 1957, the foreign policy went through a steady evolution characterized by notable changes in emphasis, which took place with the change in Malaysia's

political stewardship.

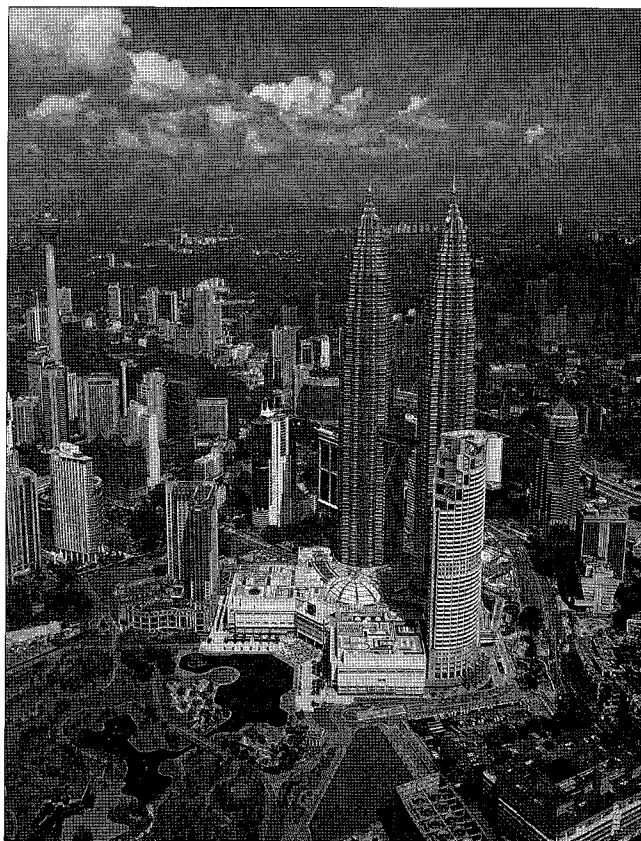
In 1981, Malaysia's foreign policy stance began to take a much greater economic orientation than ever before, coupled with a strong and nationalistic defence of the rights, interests and aspirations of developing countries and the advocacy of south-south co-operation.

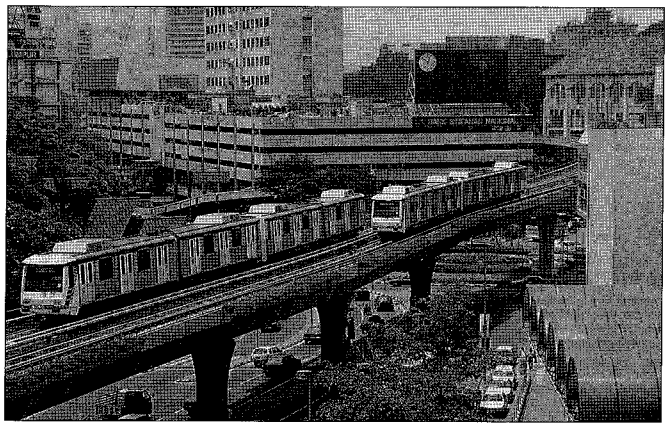
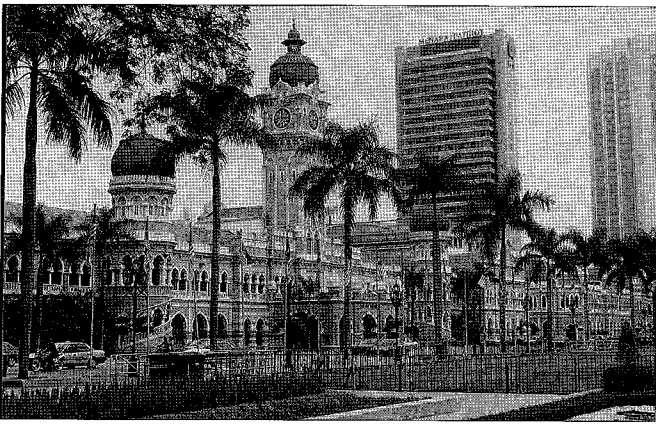
Malaysia's clear foreign policy goals in respect of defence and security, development and trade, international co-operation and diplomacy determine the pattern of relations that have been established with its neighbors. As well as with other countries within the framework of ASEAN, ARF, APEC, ASEM, South-South Co-operation, the OIC, the Commonwealth, NAM the UN and other regional and international organizations.

Developing close bilateral relations with its neighbors remains a high priority. A constructive approach had been taken to resolve outstanding problems including those related to overlapping

PETRONAS Twin Towers – Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC), 88 stories national landmark and symbol of Malaysia's progress and achievements as an emerging world-class economy. Established in the mid-1800s, Kuala Lumpur is the youngest Southeast Asian capital. It is also one of the wealthiest and most appealing, blending charming colonial buildings with modern skyscrapers. As the commercial capital of Malaysia, it is situated midway along the west coast tin and rubber belt of Peninsular/West Malaysia, at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak rivers in hilly country west of the Main Range (Banjaran Titiwangsa).

In February 1972, Kuala Lumpur was designated a municipality and in 1974 an area of 243km² Kuala Lumpur is surrounded by the State of Selangor. Any visitor to Kuala Lumpur will be struck by its many contrasts.





The Sultan Abdul Samad Building, Kuala Lumpur's landmark (Left); and the Light Rail Transit is one of the latest public transportation in the city (Right). The Malaysian economic plan aims to develop Malaysia into a knowledge-based economy where knowledge, creativity and innovation would increase productivity growth in all sectors.\

claims and the determination of land and maritime boundaries.

Every diplomatic effort is made to ensure that bilateral relations do not become adversely affected on account of such problems with all our neighbors concerned. Agreeing to refer to the ICJ, the overlapping territorial claims that Malaysia has with Indonesia and Singapore, indicates the extent to which Malaysia is prepared to go in achieving solutions to bilateral problems.

The establishment of separate joint commissions between Malaysia and Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam has also provided a useful framework to develop wide-ranging bilateral co-operation in all fields of mutual interest.

Bilateral relations with other Asian, African, Middle-Eastern, and Latin American countries would continue to be pursued without neglecting its traditional economic partners in Europe and America. Japan, the European Union, the United States, and Australia and the Republic of Korea, would remain Malaysia's major trading partners as well as the source of investment and technology, particularly in connection with the establishment of Malaysia's multimedia super corridor.

At the sub-regional level, increased efforts would be made towards realizing the benefits of the growth triangle concept-namely, the IMT-GT, the IMS-GT and the BIMP-EAGA. Such efforts would no doubt allow for prosperity to spread to the less developed areas, thereby, bringing meaning to the "prosper-thy-neighbor-policy" that is being pursued by the Government.

In the post-Cold War situation that sees the emergence of competing regional economic groupings and un certainty in the regional security environment, Malaysia believes that a strong and successful ASEAN is not only an economic necessity but also a strategic imperative.

A prosperous, consolidated and stable ASEAN at peace with itself and with its immediate neighbors provide the best guarantee for the security of the entire Southeast Asia and East Asia region. The expansion of ASEAN to include Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar, have make an even bigger contribution in developing national resilience, promoting economic growth, enhancing regional co-operation and ensuring regional peace and security.

Malaysia believes that the existence of ASEAN has encouraged patterns of behavior that reduce risks to security by enhancing bilateral relations as well as fostering habits of open dialogue on political and security matters including establishing confidence building measures.

The existing dialogue through the ASEAN PMC process and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), in which ASEAN functions as the core group, adequately serves the purpose. Malaysia hopes that the early realization of the zone of peace freedom and neutrality (ZOPFAN) including the Southeast Asian nuclear weapon free zone (SEANWFZ), will help to further enhance regional security.

Notwithstanding criticisms made against ASEAN, it is clear that co-operation within ASEAN is now firmly entrenched. ASEAN is not about to lose its dynamism, viability and relevance with the inclusion of new member states. On the contrary, increasing interest towards ASEAN and requests made for sectoral dialogue partnership by a number of Asian, African, and Latin American countries, reflect the high esteem accorded by them to ASEAN as a regional organization.

At the multilateral level, Malaysia has and will continue to be active in the OIC, Commonwealth, NAM, and the United Nations. Such fora are useful in promoting co-operation between member states, in finding solutions to global problems and in establishing common ground rules that will guide the peaceful conduct of international relations.

Malaysia will continue to use the platform available to speak on global issues like human rights, environmental degradation, terrorism, refugees, democracy, and the reform of the UN Security Council. She believe that the UN should continue to be effective in dealing with global developmental issues, peace and security, humanitarian activities, international crisis and cases of violations of the UN charter and principles of international law-in a fair and equitable manner. On the economic front, Malaysia will continue to adopt a proactive role in the WTO.

One significant phenomenon that will impact strongly on Malaysia's foreign policy as its move into the next millennium, is globalization. Thus its greatest challenge would be to extract the best from the process of globalization and to give its best to the system.

And in return to contribute towards making the world much more peaceful and equitable, to provide leadership within its region and to demonstrate exemplary and responsible membership of the international community.

Malaysia's current position as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council has indeed provided her with a forum to begin addressing some of these challenges, voice her concerns and put forth Malaysia's position on issues that affect her as well as the world.

Appropriate strategy would have to be put in place taking into account the resources available to Malaysia. It is Malaysia firm conviction that as its approach the new century, relations among sovereign states ought to be based on a new paradigm predicated not only on equality but also respect for territorial integrity, as well as recognition of mutual interests and benefits.

There should also be genuine international dialogue and co-operation. It is only on this basis perhaps that all could hope to reap the full potentials of globalization whilst promoting international peace, security and prosperity. ★