



The Federation of Malaya gained independence from Great Britain in 1957

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Embassy
Row

In a belated commemoration of the 55th anniversary of her country's independence,

Malaysian Ambassador to Mexico Jamaiah Mohamed Yusof offered a diplomatic reception at her embassy last month.

"On this significant date in 1957, Malaysia achieved its independence from the British," Yusof told her guests in her welcome speech.

"Malaysia's progress since that time has been one of the great success stories in modern history. In the span of just 55 years, the nation's economy has been transformed from one that was heavily reliant on agriculture and the export of primary commodities to that of a highly industrialized and service-oriented nation."

Yusof went on to say that, today, Malaysia is ranked among the 10 most competitive nations worldwide by the Switzerland-based Institute of Management Development (IMD), and that the country is considered the third-best outsourcing destination, with that sector expected to be worth \$1.9 billion by 2013.

She also noted that Malaysia has continued to register positive economic development despite a global financial turnaround, with 5.6-percent

growth in 2011 and a forecasted gross domestic product growth rate of 5 percent for this year, according to Moody's Analytics.

With a full 89 percent of its population considered middle class, Yusof said that Malaysia's people "are now harvesting the fruits of labor from the transformation programs" implemented by the government of Prime Minister Najib Razak.

"To move the country forward, the government has embarked on a drive to shift Malaysia from an upper-middle income country with a \$9,700 per capita income to one of a \$15,000 per capita income by the year 2020," she said.

Yusof said that her government is actively supporting emerging industries that will drive the nation's economy in the years ahead, noting that Malaysia now ranks among global leaders in tourism and high-end manufacturing industries, as well as being the front-runner in the production of halal products and Islamic financial services.

But despite its economic progress, she said that her country has not made the mistake of equating development with financial growth.

"A country must also be peaceful

and stable, a place where people live in harmony," she said.

To that end, Yusof said that her government has introduced a "One-Malaysia" program to encourage respect and cooperation between the country's three major ethnic groups through national unity and efficient governance.

The ambassador then turned her focus on Malaysia's bilateral ties with Mexico, which she defined as positive and flourishing.

"Bilateral trade between Malaysia and Mexico has increased by 41.74 percent in 2011 as compared to the comparable figures in 2007," she said.

"Last year, the total combined trade amounted to \$2.03 billion ... and Mexico was Malaysia's second-largest trade partner in Latin America."

By the same token, she said, Mexico was Malaysia's largest export destination and fourth-largest export source in the region.

"It is evident that our bilateral trade is growing, with a heavy concentration on electrical and electronic products," Yusof said.

"And with the (recent) inclusion of Mexico in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TTP), business between both

countries looks very promising"

Yusof also spoke about the Mexico-Malaysia Friendship Group, a binational legislative organization aimed at fostering two-way relations and plans for a Mexican commercial mission to visit Malaysia early next year.

She also said that there is growing bilateral collaboration in the academic and cultural fields and stressed that there remains "enormous untapped potential for cooperation between both countries in a multitude of areas other than trade and education."

Yusof concluded her speech by congratulating the government of outgoing President Felipe Calderón for its social and economic successes and saying that she hoped Malaysian-Mexican ties will continue to expand in years ahead.

Malaysia gained national independence from Great Britain on Aug. 31, 1957, although at that time it was called the Federation of Malaya.

The country formally changed its name to Malaysia in 1963 when it incorporated Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak in addition to the Malay Peninsula.

Although Singapore separated two years later to become an independent state, Malaysia has remained a dominant player in Southeast Asia and was a founding member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Malaysia first opened a resident embassy in Mexico in 1992.

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