

## THE MEF YOUNG EUROPEAN INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

The Malaysia-Europe Forum is embarking on The MEF Young European Internship Programme and its objective is to place European interns in Malaysian companies, in order to raise awareness and better understanding, about Malaysia-Europe current issues, as well as foster better general understanding about Malaysia, Asia and Europe as a whole.



The MEF is currently in the process of identifying Malaysian partner companies that are interested to hire and absorb these European interns into their respective organisations.

These Malaysian companies will be able to tap into the services of highly qualified European students with exceptional academic results, specialised in various professional fields. These interns will also have the unique opportunity to work in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic environment, contributing to the development of mutual understanding, trust and tolerance.

If you are an adventurous young European, with a background in international relations, economics, computer sciences, engineering, finance, accounting or multimedia information technology, and genuinely interested to learn more about Malaysia and what it can offer you professionally, we would like to hear from you.

Please send in your CV and a 250 word essay in English on 'Why I intend to serve as an intern in Malaysia', to the MEF's Executive Director, Natasha Zulkifli at [natasha@malaysia-europeforum.com](mailto:natasha@malaysia-europeforum.com)

Malaysian companies interested to participate in this programme should also contact Ms Zulkifli for further details.



## SAVE OUR PLANET 2011

The Malaysia-Europe Forum continues to support and partner the Save Our Planet conference series which was launched in 2010 to propose solutions to the urgent issue of the climate crisis currently facing mankind. Save Our Planet in 2011 will continue the debate and discuss the urgent challenges at hand and strategise on what is necessary, moving forward, in response to the environmental challenges and dangers before us.

In 2011, the Save Our Planet conference series will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Bangkok, while plans to hold the series in India, Vietnam, Indonesia and China are also on the drawing board.

Save Our Planet 2011 will begin in Thailand on Friday, March 18th. Scheduled to be held at the Shangri-La Hotel in Bangkok, the conference is expected to draw a high-profile audience from the Thai government, the private sector, the diplomatic core as well as the NGO sphere.

Malaysia-Europe Forum will host this event in Kuala Lumpur at the Mandarin Oriental in the second half of 2011. Should you be interested to participate as a speaker or attend as a delegate, kindly contact the MEF's Kuala Lumpur Secretariat.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

1 **Save Our Planet – Bangkok**  
Friday, 18th March 2011

2 **The MEF Vienna Spring Dialogue – Vienna**  
Monday, 9th May 2011

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# DIALOG



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## LIVELY DISCUSSION AND A MALAYSIAN GREAT, LIGHT UP THE NOVEMBER DIALOGUE IN KL

In continuing with its tradition of hosting a dialogue in Kuala Lumpur every November, the Malaysia-Europe Forum was honoured to host His Excellency Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the Keynote Speaker at the 3rd MEF Kuala Lumpur Dialogue 2010 on 30th November 2010.

More than 250 people comprising of ambassadors, trade commissioners, civil servants, business leaders, professionals, academics, students and members of the media crowded into the ballroom at the Crowne Plaza Mutiara in Kuala Lumpur to hear Tun Mahathir share his thoughts, perspectives and experience on the Malaysian political landscape.

Covering issues from Malaysia's independence right up to Malaysia under the current prime ministership of Dato' Seri Najib Razak, Tun Dr Mahathir was his usual blunt and candid self. Tun Dr Mahathir maintained that upon independence, Malaysia has been able to manage a complex multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious population while reasonably closely adhering to the principles of democracy. Few countries which gained independence after World War II have done as well. He gave various examples of this and also gave his perspective on the events that had occurred under the stewardship of Malaysia's six Prime Ministers to date.

As is the MEF's objective for openness in order to explain the issues, Tun Dr Mahathir also actively participated in a dialogue with the audience, moderated by Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz, MEF's advisor, patron and trustee. In the MEF's spirit of forthright and frank discussion, Tun Dr Mahathir gamely answered all questions including issues relating to the Malaysian education system, the financial crisis engulfing Europe, the Malaysian brain drain, as well as his prediction for Malaysia's next general election.

Prior to Tun Dr Mahathir taking the stage, the MEF was honoured to host four eminent speakers in a session entitled 'The Path To Better Business and Trade Between Malaysia And Europe: Looking Beyond the Obvious Obstacles and Opportunities'.

The speakers were Datuk Dr Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria, Secretary-General of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI); Mr David Jones, Chairman of the EU-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce & Industry (EUMCCI); Ms Ashild Kajok, Deputy



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad



Ambassador of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur; and Datuk Iskandar Mizal Mahmood, CEO of the Malaysian Biotechnology Corporation. They presented papers on issues relating to the Malaysia EU Free Trade Association, the EU's trade policies globally and within ASEAN, the European Free Trade Association as well as discussed whether biotechnology was the answer to sustainable business between Malaysia and Europe.

The MEF looks forward to continuing to host this series of November dialogues on an annual basis, in Kuala Lumpur, to allow for more open engagement in order to create better understanding between Malaysia and Europe.

For a copy of the official report, kindly contact the MEF's Kuala Lumpur Secretariat

# SPOTLIGHT ON AUSTRIA

The Malaysia-Europe Forum is partnering the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber to bring the 3rd MEF Spring Dialogue in Europe to Vienna, Austria in May 2011. DIALOG would like to take this opportunity to shine a light on the country itself and its relationship with Malaysia.

Austria's alpine landscapes, its rich history and its celebrated cities are well known throughout the world. Less known is the country's diversity and plurality where modern spirit walks hand in hand with deep-rooted traditions. The country's well-developed market economy has ensured the population enjoy a high standard of living. Its economy features a large service sector, a sound industrial sector, and a small but highly developed agricultural sector. Vienna hosts the IAEA, the UNIDO and several UN departments, amongst others.

Austria has a relatively small population of less than 8.5 million, yet ranks as one of the 12 richest countries in the world in terms of GDP. It is landlocked but occupies a strategic position at the crossroads of central Europe. German is the official national language and more than 70% of people are Roman Catholic. Austria joined the European Union in 1995 and since then has forged close ties to other EU economies, especially Germany's.

DIALOG sat down with H.E. Andrea Wicke, Austria's Ambassador to Malaysia and with Dr Franz Schröder, Commercial Counsellor from the Commercial Section at the Austrian Embassy here in Kuala Lumpur, to gain a better perspective on the current issues at hand and how relations between Malaysia and Austria can be improved.

## Q&A with Ambassador



**H.E. Mrs Andrea Wicke  
Ambassador**

H.E. Mrs Andrea Wicke has a degree in Philology and a Diploma in Musical / Operetta, Acting and Vocal Pedagogy. In the mid-80s, Ambassador Wicke was a professional singer and actress, appearing on TV, in films and in theatre productions. She went on to obtain a postgraduate degree in International Relations at Vienna University and thereafter entered the Austrian Foreign Service in 1995. Ambassador Wicke has been posted to Zagreb, Prague, Sofia and Vilnius, prior to being posted to Kuala Lumpur in November 2009. Ambassador Wicke is married with 2 children.

### What are your priorities in strengthening brand Austria here in Malaysia?

The main work for strengthening brand Austria on company and commercial levels is naturally done by our commercial department. The embassy itself nevertheless is very active in promoting it at appropriate occasions.

In general, I see Austria's main brand characteristics as stability, reliability and at the same time flexibility and creativity in adapting to changing environments and circumstances. Austria can show this through its success story of the past 60+ years, when it developed from a war-torn occupied country into the prosperous state of today. In past years, Austria had to adapt to a number of challenges - from finding a position within the cold war world order, being situated directly at the Iron Curtain, to a completely new positioning after the fall of the Iron Curtain and our accession to the EU (1995); as well as positioning a relatively small country within an increasingly globalised world. In the very recent financial crisis, Austria has shown very good management and has overcome the crisis in a relatively short time.

**The Austrian President, Mr Heinz Fischer, visited Kuala Lumpur in November 2010. How has his visit impacted bilateral government-to-government relations between Austria and Malaysia?**

With this visit, conducted on the highest possible level, relations were strengthened remarkably. The president was accompanied by two ministers and a state secretary as well as many other high functionaries of the Austrian state. The delegation comprised 125 plus people, including the economic delegation, which demonstrates Austria's strong commitment to deepen her relations with Malaysia. Only six weeks after the visit, the Foreign Minister of Malaysia paid an official visit to Austria, and invitations of Austrian Ministers have been sent to their Malaysian counterparts to come to Austria and to further intensify cooperation.

### Are there close educational ties between Malaysia and Austria? How can these be improved further?

Of course we have existing cooperation and student exchange programmes but there is certainly room for improvement. The recent state visit has been beneficial in this field, too, as a high ranking cultural delegation accompanying the president not only strengthened existing contacts and established new ones, but also concluded memoranda of cooperation for further enhancement of our educational ties.

**Austria has such a rich cultural heritage: music, literature and art, to name a few. You yourself have a musical and acting background. Why do you think a small country such as Austria manages to produce such great personalities and characters?**

While nowadays Austria is a rather small, medium-sized European country, it used to be considerably bigger with a huge pool of talent. Arts in all their forms have always played an important and integral part in our lives and have also for centuries been intensively encouraged and sponsored through

## Q&A with Commercial Counsellor



**Dr Franz Schröder  
Commercial Counsellor**

Dr Franz Schröder has been the Commercial Counsellor at the Austrian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, since 2005.

### The Austrian President, Mr Heinz Fischer, recently visited Malaysia with a large business delegation. Can you share with DIALOG the sectors or industries that Austrian businesses are interested in, here in Malaysia.

Yes, as representatives from Advantage Austria in Kuala Lumpur, we were proud and honoured to co-organise a programme for our President, Dr. Heinz Fischer. We were very pleased to see a big business delegation accompanying our president. The Economic Forum showed that there is high interest among Austrian as well as Malaysian businesses for closer cooperation and more contacts. Trade between Austria and Malaysia is already at a quite high level. In 2009, Malaysia exported goods worth more than €212 million and gained a slight trade surplus of €10 million. Most of the Austrian goods, worth €202 million, were electronic parts and machinery, especially for the plastic, metalworking and construction industries. But we also view environmental technologies made in Austria as important export items. This already demonstrates in which sectors Austrian companies are interested in cooperating with Malaysian counterparts. Advantage Austria in Kuala Lumpur always tries to get more companies interested in the Malaysian market and organises various activities in selected sectors every year. In 2011, the main emphasis lies on green technology and building technologies. We will organise seminars on 'Renewable Energies' in spring and 'Innovative Building Technologies' in autumn. We will also participate together with Austrian companies at major trade fairs in these sectors, such as IGEM 2011 or Archidex 2011.

### Austria has a thriving green technology industry. What areas or sectors do you see as being of possible interest to Malaysia?

Austria has been engaged in green technologies for a long time and our companies have developed outstanding know-how in this sector. Already, Austrian expertise and technologies were used in Malaysia in the water, waste water and hydro power sector. Lately, Malaysian interests shifted more into renewable energies like biodiesel, biogas or solar power. The first projects between our nations involved in these sectors have already been implemented and I am sure that more will come in the future as Malaysia has the resources to utilise these technologies.

all layers of society. That is also the reason why until today we are very keen in looking after our cultural heritage well: culture in all its forms is an important part of our identity. In such an environment talents naturally find a fertile soil to unfold their best potential.

### What steps does the Austrian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur take to improve awareness and understanding about Austrian culture? Are there any big plans for 2011?

We are taking part in many events, in the cultural as well as commercial field, both in the wider framework of the European Union's common

### How did the international financial crisis and global economic downturn affect Austria? What measures did the government take to stabilise the economy?

The financial crisis did not affect Austria that much. The involvement of the Austrian financial sector in the United States was not that huge. There was more a direct effect caused by the Icelandic crisis but the scale of it was rather small. Like Malaysia, Austria has been more affected by the crisis in international trade as Austria is a very export oriented economy. In 2009, exports slipped by -20% and of course the situation for many companies was difficult. In Austria a stimulus package was created but even more important was the fact that labour regulations were eased and companies could employ more easily on a part time basis or other flexible working schemes. Therefore unemployment remained relatively low. Now Austria is back to business as usual.

### As negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement between Malaysia and the EU progress, what sectors are key to the Austrian business community during this negotiation process?

I do not think that there are sectors which are especially important to our companies. It is more vital that Europe overall should not lose out to other economic regions when dealing with Malaysia. An FTA will ensure the competitiveness of Austrian companies. It also is recognition of Malaysia being not only an important economic partner but also a developed nation.

### How have tourism numbers been recently? Is Malaysia an attractive tourist destination for Austrians?

Austria is a top tourist destination in Europe and tourism revenue, even during the economic crisis, has been stable. In 2009, income from tourism was very high at €21.3 billion. Thus tourism contributed 7.7% to Austria's GDP. In recent years we have seen tourist arrivals from South East Asia increasing, including from Malaysia. Top destinations besides Vienna are Salzburg and the lake district as well as Innsbruck. On the other hand Malaysia is a good choice for Austrian travellers in South East Asia although the full potential of the market has not yet been tapped. The visit of our federal president to Malaysia and more aggressive promotion of Malaysia in Austria could lead to more Austrian visitors to Malaysia.

activities, like for instance the European film festival last November, as well as solely under the Austrian "brand". Of course we have plans to bring famous Austrian musicians to Malaysia, especially the Vienna Boys Choir which is planning to perform both in Kota Kinabalu as well as in Kuala Lumpur in the autumn of 2011. We also try to encourage an Austrian Jazz group to participate in the famous Penang Jazz Festival this year and the collaboration in fine arts. As far as I know, a famous and excellent Austrian conductor is planning to come for the 2012 New Year's Concerts in Kuala Lumpur, the year in which we will celebrate 50 years of diplomatic ties and excellent relationship between our two beautiful countries.