

This contribution should make a useful addition to the reading list of Development Economics courses everywhere. The final chapter on the role of the government by Ow Chin-Hock should be of great interest to students and to foreign readers who do not really know the Singapore story.

This volume of essays is useful to students, to specialists on Southeast Asian economies, as well as to the general reader who wishes to know what is worth knowing about the economic development of Singapore between 1959 and 1984.

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***New Economic Dynamo: Structures and Investment Opportunities in the Malaysian Economy.***  
By Fong Chan Onn. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986. Pp. xvi, 191.

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*New Economic Dynamo* is the latest book by one of Malaysia's most prolific economists, Fong Chan Onn. It is an attempt to provide a business-oriented overview of the Malaysian economy. The back cover blurb claims "this is the first book to provide a concise, broad description of the Malaysian economy and its new business and investment opportunities".

While having broader appeal, this book is clearly written for a business audience, especially in its later chapters. The nine chapters fall broadly within three sections. The first, comprising chapters 1 and 2, provide a useful review of the socio-political environment (history, constitution, the New Economic Policy), and a general review of the economy up to the early 1980s. Next, chapters 3 to 7 examine important sectors of the economy. These include (physical) infrastructure, the banking and

financial system, the labour market (including, briefly, trade unions), and the marketing system. The approach in each of these chapters is largely fact-oriented and institutional, rather than issue-oriented and analytical.

The third section of the book examines the business environment in more detail. One chapter outlines the system of business regulation, including licensing, taxation and fiscal incentives. Another canvasses investment opportunities in a range of activities from agri-business through to construction. The final chapter, "Starting a Business in Malaysia" is a business compendium of facts and figures. Five appendices provide additional business information.

As a guide to business in Malaysia this is a useful contribution. The strengths of the book are that it is well-written, informative, and comprehensive; the tables and figures (all fifty-six of them) have been put together with a good deal of care; and the author's credentials as one of the country's foremost business economists are impeccable.

This is not meant to be an academic textbook, and it is inappropriate to review it only according to academic standards. However, in future editions it might be strengthened in at least two directions. First, while the description of the business environment and institutions is very detailed, there is less information on the practical operation of the system. Are all regulations implemented with equal vigour? How important are "bureaucratic politics" in the commercial environment? What significant changes have occurred in the last decade, especially with regard to the NEP? These are, of course, complex and sensitive questions and the author could fairly reply that they are better discussed in other forums.

Secondly, the reader gets only a passing glimpse at some of Malaysia's major development issues and debates. This is perhaps not an important area for business, but these debates will condition future economic policies. One obvious issue is the viability of Malaysia's push for heavy industry, beginning in the late 1970s.

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Another is the persistence of high levels of inequality in the distribution of income and wealth, despite the creditable macroeconomic performance. Still another is the government's response (and options) to the deteriorating balance of payments position in the 1980s. A brief review of these and other questions would have contributed to the reader's understanding of Malaysian development, while not adding greatly to the book's length. It might also be added that history has been a little unkind to the author. The manuscript was written during

the era of rapid growth and the author adopts an optimistic prognosis. But the book was published during the country's worst recession in over a decade.

In sum, this is a very useful book for a wide business audience. It will also be invaluable for university courses on international business in the ASEAN region and beyond.

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