

PAFTAD must bridge any information asymmetry or at least the outcomes in lay person terms by making them simple and result-oriented.

The combined and accumulated wisdom and experience of this thirty-one-strong edited volume could stretch further and farther in future conferences. A broad multi-disciplinary and multifaceted array of chapters has been produced. Greater due diligence to truly practising and seeing through a few prescriptions would be appreciated. If the PAFTAD intellectual think-tank cannot think this out, it would be a remiss for yet another conference and volume in another PAFTAD year. PAFTAD is itself globalizing beyond Asia and Australia to being co-sponsored by the Brandeis International Business School and East-West Center for its thirtieth big bang. PAFTAD has to be a continuous harbinger by its creative innovative momentum.

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***Malaysia: From Kampung to Twin Towers.* By Richard Leete.** Shah Alam: Oxford Fajar, 2007. Pp. 358.

The publication of *Malaysia: From Kampung to Twin Towers* coincides with the celebrations of fifty years of Independence in Malaysia. It documents the economic and social progress that Malaysia has achieved over the past fifty years and some of the development challenges that it faces today. The book begins with a chapter that examines how changes in Malaysia's demography over the past fifty years have profoundly influenced its economic development. This is followed by chapters on the growth and

transformation of the economy, and poverty eradication and the restructuring of society. The final chapters examine achievements in the areas of education, health, and greater gender equality.

The tone of this book is perhaps set in the forward, which states that at Independence Malaysia was on par with Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Ghana, Morocco and Senegal in terms of per capita income. However, fifty years on, its per capita income is double that of Sri Lanka, three times that of the Philippines and Morocco, and six times that of Ghana and Senegal. The message is that Malaysia's record is one of success, which deserves to be celebrated and to be emulated by other developing countries.

However, it also true that Malaysia has slipped in the East Asian growth league table and its performance in the East Asian neighbourhood has been mediocre. Both South Korea and Taiwan, which started out with lower levels of per capita GDP, have well surpassed Malaysia fifty years later, while several that started almost on par or at lower levels of per capita GDP have grown much faster. In terms of total factor productivity, Malaysia has also lagged behind.

Since Independence, Malaysia has been ruled by just one political party, and the policies of that party, particularly the New Economic Policy and its current variant, have been instrumental in charting the development and growth trajectory in Malaysia. As there is no counterfactual to the NEP and no way of gauging what growth rates would have prevailed in its absence, perhaps the challenge is then is to explain how Malaysia was able to do as well as it did it spite of the NEP. Was it just good luck and did good policy have much to do with it?

Leete maintains that unlike many other resource-rich countries, Malaysia did not succumb to the curse of reliance on its natural resource abundance and is one of the leading exporters of high technology electronics. However, underlying the impressive growth of the Malaysian manufacturing are a number of serious shortcomings. These include a high concentration in the electronics sub-sector, high foreign ownership, weak linkages, and human resource

constraints. The East Asian success stories on the other hand were able to nurture and develop a world-class indigenous manufacturing sector. In contrast the Malaysian government played a fairly passive role, concentrating on developing a Malay capitalist class and greater Malay share ownership. However, unlike the East Asian success stories, Malaysia was able to rely on resource rents to make up for the weaknesses in this sector, to bail out loss-making state enterprises as well as firms of the well connected.

Leete also asserts that Malaysia has had stunning success with poverty eradication but concedes that the restructuring objectives of the NEP are perceived to have primarily benefited an elite minority and did not contribute to growth. Many costly errors were made in Malaysia both in the manner that the NEP was implemented and in terms of spawning a group of beneficiaries who are closely connected with the ruling party and have a vested interest in ensuring its continuation.

A political economy perspective is indispensable in gaining an understanding of both the achievements and the shortcomings of Malaysia's social and economic development. An occasional slap on the wrist was delivered with some critical observations at the end of some chapters, however it would have been far more beneficial if all of these could have been combined into one chapter assessing some of the failings of the Malaysian model.

After reading this book, those with little familiarity of the Malaysian experience may be forgiven for coming away with the impression that it is an unqualified success. In some respects, there is little mention of the silence of debate, the press and political opposition through the use of various pieces of legislation. The erosion of the rule of law, lack of meritocracy in the civil service, inefficient state enterprises, and the cost of government intervention in the economy, not to mention corruption, are also little mentioned.

Even more disconcerting are the reports that after fifty years of Independence, communalism is on the rise and the lack of political will to address an issue that is now a binding constraint on Malaysia's future prosperity, i.e. the NEP. The

opportunity costs of the NEP have been high and are rising as Malaysia strives to achieve Vision 2020 within the context of globalization. Given the positives as well as the inconvenient negatives, exactly which aspects of the Malaysian models should other developing countries seek to emulate and which should they eschew?

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Beyond the Green Myth: Borneo's Hunter-Gatherers in the Twenty-First Century. Edited by Peter Sercombe and Bernard Sellato. Denmark: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2007. Pp. 384.

Recent research on the Penan, Punan, and other indigenous communities (Dayak) have been sporadic at best; much more was written and researched on such communities in the 1970s to late 1990s by noted anthropologists, with some very noteworthy publications to be found in *The Sarawak Museum Journal*. In that respect, the present publication fills a very important gap, serving both policy-makers and academics with a comprehensive collection of works related to the impact of economic development and modernization on the subsistence economic needs of indigenous communities.

I will situate the analysis of this book within the context of analysing the sustainability of forest use by indigenous communities, and the violation of their forest property rights in the context of modernization.

In this respect, a clear definition and enforcement of property rights is essential for apportioning forest benefits and for concurrently addressing the needs of indigenous community groups, timber and business communities, and nature conservationists in the quest for modernization and development. If rights to one