

Culture, art will enhance Russia-Malaysia relations

By [Dr Victor A. Pogadaev](#) - January 15, 2023 @ 1:51pm



Some participants of the conference after its completion. - Pic courtesy of Writer

IN December 2022, the MGIMO Asean Centre of Russia's Foreign Affairs Ministry hosted a conference dedicated to the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Malaysia.

A feature of this event, in contrast to the modest symposium on the same topic in April this year, was the presence of not only Russian scientists and representatives of business circles, but also a delegation from Malaysia.

The delegation included Khalek Awang, President, Alumni Foundation, International Islamic University of Malaysia; Teoh Seng Lee, Honorary Consul of Russia in Penang; Muamar Mohd Mokhtar, Executive Director at 3F Resources; Mohd Khair Ngadiron, Director of Permanent Secretariat of National Book Council of Malaysia Education Ministry; Adibah Omar, Chief Executive Officer of Book City Corporation; and, Rahul Mishra, Director of the Centre for Asean Regionalism of University of Malaya.

Russia's Ambassador to Malaysia, Naiyl Latypov, and Charge D'Affairs of the Embassy of Malaysia in Moscow, Johan Ariff Abdul Razak, presented welcoming

remarks to the conference participants. The conference sessions were focused on history, politics, economy and business, innovations and startups, translations and book industry.

On the sidelines of the conference is the exhibition prepared by the Asean Centre in collaboration with the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry. The exhibition features the archival documents and photos illustrating the history of Russia-Malaysia diplomatic relations development.

For me, personally, the establishment of Russian-Malaysian diplomatic relations determined my life path.

After the establishment of diplomatic relations, an intergovernmental agreement on student exchange was signed, and the first group of four Soviet students arrived at the University of Malaya to study the Malay language in 1970.

I was lucky to be among them. We saw not only a beautiful country, but also got acquainted with its culture and hospitable people, including writers, singers and artists. Of particular importance for us was our acquaintance with the writers (Datuk) Usman Awang and Kemala.

After returning to our homeland, many of us connected our creative life with Malaysia and its study. Tatiana Dorofeeva became a lecturer on Malay at Lomonosov Moscow State University while Anatoly Voronkov became famous as a journalist covering the news of Nusantara countries.

Meetings with Usman Awang gave me the impetus to take up translation work. At his request, I made my first translations from Russian into Malay. These were poems by the Soviet poet, Mikhail Matusovsky.

It was followed by translations of the poems of Usman Awang himself and Kemala, as well as the works of Anwar Ridhwan into Russian. Russian readers also got acquainted with the works of National Laureats A. Samad Said, Siti Zainon Ismail, Zurinah Hassan, Baha Zain and Mohammad Haji Salleh.

For Malaysian readers, they're able to read in Malay some works of Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Anton Chekhov, Mikhail Sholokhov and other Russian and Soviet writers and poets.

I like to hope that relations between our countries will continue to develop fruitfully, covering all new areas of cooperation, including culture and art, which are of great importance for mutual understanding between the two peoples.

In this regard, I always quote the Malay saying, Tak kenal maka tak cinta.

The writer, writing from Russia, is former lecturer at Universiti Malaya