

# Multifaceted Ties

Phoebe Yeh (葉非比), head of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Malaysia and Taiwan's representative to the country, discusses the impact of the New Southbound Policy on bilateral relations.

PHOTOS BY CHEN MEI-LING

**The New Southbound Policy (NSP) is a key plank in the government's national development strategy that aims to deepen links with South and Southeast Asia, as well as Australia and New Zealand. How has its promotion intensified trade and investment between Taiwan and Malaysia?**

**Phoebe Yeh:** Government efforts to expand ties with Malaysia and other NSP target countries are paying off, as reflected by increased trade and investment. Statistics from the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation show

trade between Taiwan and Malaysia surged more than 36 percent year on year to US\$36.6 billion in 2022. Taiwan is Malaysia's third largest source of imports and 12th largest export market.

As for investment, total funding from Taiwan to Malaysia reached US\$14.1



billion by 2022, making Taiwan its eighth largest foreign investor. With the Asian Development Bank anticipating 4.67 percent economic growth for Malaysia in 2023, we expect bilateral trade to continue steadily increasing.

**Now that pandemic restrictions have been lifted, the government is working to revive international tourism. How do Malaysians view Taiwan as a travel destination?**

**Yeh:** Malaysia's population is about 70 percent Malays and other Indigenous peoples, 23 percent ethnic Chinese and 7 percent ethnic Indians. Due to similarities in culture, food and language, many Chinese Malaysians enjoy the familiarity of Taiwan and consider it a top holiday destination.

Since one of the NSP's objectives is to strengthen people-to-people connections with target countries, the government has put a lot of resources into promoting tourism. Marketing campaigns like Taiwan, My Next Destination and Salam Taiwan were designed to respectively target ethnic Chinese and Muslim Malaysians. To ensure broad exposure, their messages were delivered across the internet, print media, television and radio.


The resumption of visa-free entry and direct flights has also substantially increased the convenience of two-way travel. Overall, we're optimistic about achieving our annual target of 300,000 arrivals from Malaysia.

**Taiwan boasts quality higher education and is actively recruiting international students. What efforts are underway to attract Malaysians?**

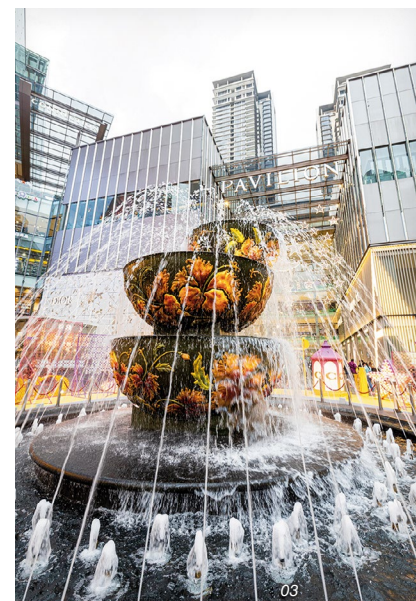
**Yeh:** The number of Malaysians who have graduated from universities in Taiwan has now surpassed 100,000. Many have gone on to accomplish remarkable things, and they now wield their considerable influence to promote our programs.

On our end, my office's Education Division provides information to prospective students and cooperates with local

schools and alumni associations to organize education fairs and exchange activities. The Kuala Lumpur-based Federation of Alumni Association of Taiwan Universities, Malaysia similarly boosts recruitment by hosting the Taiwan Higher Education Fair and offering consultations to students considering higher studies in Taiwan. The Ministry of Education [MOE]-funded Chinese Taipei School in Kuala Lumpur also promotes Mandarin learning and helps its alumni apply to Taiwan universities.

Lastly, financial incentives like the MOE's Taiwan Scholarship for bachelor's and master's programs and the Huayu Enrichment Scholarship for Chinese courses further entice international students to study in Taiwan. 

—interview by Kelly Her



01. Phoebe Yeh, head of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Malaysia and Taiwan's representative to the country
02. The Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur are the world's tallest twin skyscrapers.
03. Pavilion Crystal Fountain at the main entrance to the Pavilion Kuala Lumpur shopping mall showcases artwork by Liuligongfang, a contemporary glass studio in Taiwan.
04. The Sultan Abdul Samad Building, formerly known as Government Offices, is one of Malaysia's most prominent heritage buildings and a popular tourist spot.

