



Tan Sri Dato' Ajit Singh

Tan Sri Dato' Ajit Singh was born and educated in Malaysia. He graduated with a B.A. Hons. in History in 1963 from the University of Malaysia and joined the Malaysian Foreign Service the same year.

In a career spanning just over 30 years, he served in various positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at Malaysian missions abroad in Canberra, Addis Ababa, and New York. He was Malaysia's Ambassador to Vietnam, Austria, Brazil, (with concurrent accreditation to Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela) and Germany.

He also spent a considerable amount of time on multilateral diplomacy and represented his country at meetings of the various UN bodies, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Commonwealth, APEC and ASEAN.

He was elected the first Secretary-General of ASEAN, which carries the rank of a Minister and served a five-year term from 1 January 1993 to 31 December 1997. It was during his tenure as Secretary-General that the ASEAN Secretariat began playing a more prominent and effective role in strengthening intra-ASEAN cooperation. Of particular significance was the implementation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), for which the Secretariat became the focal point. It was also during his tenure that ASEAN expanded to include three new members, Vietnam (July 1995), Laos and Myanmar (July 1997).

In recognition of his services, both Laos and Vietnam awarded him their prestigious Friendship Medals in December 1997. He was also awarded the Panglima Setia Mahkota award, which carries the title of "Tan Sri" by His Majesty the King of Malaysia at His Majesty's Official Birthday on June 6, 1998. The Indonesian Government awarded him the "Bintang Jasa Utama" in February 1999 in recognition of his work in ASEAN and in helping to improve Malaysia - Indonesia relations.

After leaving the Secretariat, he joined the National Petroleum Oil Company, PETRONAS, where he worked as Director, International Business Ventures from August 1997 to October 1999.

He then proceeded to Hainan, PRC to assist in the establishment of the Boao Forum of Asia, a non-governmental, non-profit organization set up to promote greater interdependence and economic integration of the Asian region. He was elected as the first Secretary-General of the Forum in February 2001 and left the post in November 2002.

Upon his return to Malaysia, he held various positions in academia, the corporate world, and the NGOs. Notably, he was a Distinguished Research Fellow at the Asia-Europe Institute,(AEI), of the University of Malaysia, Chairman of the Nam Fatt Corporation, a publicly listed development and construction company, the Principal Adviser for ASEAN to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, (FICCI), based in New Delhi, Advisor to the Malaysia-India Business Council, a member of the government established Malaysia-India CEO Forum, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of MERCY Malaysia, the internationally well-known humanitarian organization providing aid in disaster and relief-stricken areas and countries.

In January 2009, he was appointed as a Member of the Prime Minister of India's Global Advisory Council of Overseas Indians.

In January 2011, he was awarded India's highest award for an Overseas Indian, the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award, by the Indian Government.

Tan Sri Ajit was selected as one of the 4 Icons who have rendered distinguished service to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (Wisma Putra) and the nation. The portraits and citations of the four are displayed in a gallery in the Ministry.