



Academics Kishore Mahbubani and Jeffery Sng, with guest of honour Wang Gungwu (far left), at the launch of their book, *The ASEAN Miracle*. Over the years, ASEAN has brought peace and prosperity to the region, with Singapore the biggest winner, says Prof Mahbubani. ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI

Asean deserves a Nobel Peace Prize, says Kishore Mahbubani

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Asean's success in ensuring peace and economic and socio-political progress in the world's most diverse region should merit a Nobel Peace Prize as it marks its 50th anniversary this year, according to a new book.

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) dean Kishore Mahbubani and South-east Asian historian Jeffery Sng yesterday launched *The ASEAN Miracle: A Catalyst for Peace*, in which they discuss Asean's achievements and the challenges ahead.

"When Asean was born on the 8th of August, 1967, it was destined to fail," said Professor Mahbubani, noting that two predecessors, the Association of South-East Asia and Maphilindo (Malaya-Philippines-Indonesia), died within two years and the region was riven by wars in the 1960s and 70s.

But over the years, Asean has brought durable peace and delivered prosperity, with Singapore the biggest beneficiary, said Prof Mahbubani, who has written five other books on Asia and global affairs.

"In 1970, the combined gross national product of Asean was US\$95

billion (S\$135 billion), and now it is about US\$2.5 trillion," he noted. "Our total trade has gone up 91 times since 1970."

Despite disagreements among its 10 members, Asean has served as a forum for cooperation with great powers such as the United States, China, the European Union, India, Japan and Russia.

Professor Wang Gungwu, chairman of the LKYSPP governing board, said: "(The book) does project a picture of Asean that is the most comprehensive that I've ever seen, and also gives Asean the kind of credit that it hasn't received for a long, long time."

Describing Asean as perhaps "the most under-rated organisation",

even among its own members, Prof Mahbubani said: "One reason why people are very confused about Asean is that it always takes two steps forward, one step backward, one step sideward – like a crab. It seems to be going around in circles."

"But the amazing thing is... when you watch it a decade later, it has gone there. It's amazing how it moves forward, decade by decade."

The book is available on the NUS Press online store (<https://nuspress.nus.edu.sg>) and at leading bookshops for \$24.

It will be translated into all the major Asean languages, with support from the Lee Foundation.

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