It is always welcoming to find new books on Malaysia’s economic development. This is more so when one considers that the development of modern Malaysia is fascinating (not least because it challenges conventional economic thinking), and offers the possibility that poor and backward countries may draw some lessons from Malaysia’s experience. Leete takes readers through Malaysia’s journey from a peasant society (kampung) to a modern industrial powerhouse symbolised by the national icon—the Petronas Twin Towers. The journey, which began with Leete’s analysis of the Malaysian institutional structures, had not been an easy one. During various stages of economic development, the growth momentum was derailed by internal and external shocks, which took the form of political instability generated by ethnic tensions and the deteriora-

Chapters One and Three provide superb and in-depth insights into the various development plans or strategies initiated by the state to minimise and stabilise such shocks. Manufacturing was earmarked as the engine of growth as a result of the deterioration in commodity prices. The expansion of the manufacturing sector had not only generated large employment opportunities for the rapidly growing population, but more importantly the higher wages (being offered by the manufacturing sector compared to the agricultural sector) helped to reduce the incidence of poverty and interracial economic disparities (Chapter Four), thereby minimising ethnic tensions.

In explaining the economic success of Malaysia, Leete focuses on an important theme: the role of human capital on economic development. Chapter Two provides a background for this theme by examining the various issues—ethnic composition, urbanisation, labour migration and demographic transition—associated with population growth. In order to increase the capacity and productivity of labour that was needed to hasten the pace of structural transformation, a series of initiatives (covered in Chapters Five and Six) were implemented to expand the education and health systems. One area that is not explored near enough in the literature is the role of women in economic development. It is most pleasing to see Leete devote an entire chapter (Chapter Seven) to examining women’s contributions to Malaysia’s economic growth.

However, there is one issue in the book that I find difficult not to highlight. Leete makes the point that Malaysia’s capacity to enjoy higher growth rates hinges on technological advancement. Yet, the relationship between technological progress and growth has not been discussed adequately in this book. Perhaps it is not the purpose of this book to examine this relationship. However, using Paul Krugman’s brief analysis—as Leete does in his book—to make the point that Malaysia’s growth will not be as rapid as it was (in the last 50 years) for the next 50 years is a bit discomfiting, given that there are many problems associated with estimating total factor productivity (TFP), upon which Krugman’s argument is based. In fact, there is an extensive body of literature that questions the validity and applicability of the TFP approach in explaining East Asian growth performance.

Altogether, Leete’s book provides an important addition to the literature on the development of Malaysia. However, this is not a book of extensive original analysis; rather, it is a book in which the analysis is built upon by much that has already been written by other authors. This is not to imply that readers will not gain much or learn anything new from this book. On the contrary, it is a useful and indispensable book to anyone seeking up-to-date information and a general understanding of economic and social development in Malaysia. Scholars and students who are keen to understand the success of Malaysia will find Leete’s volume a good source of reference. More importantly, the meticulous attention given to documenting the various development strategies over the 50-year period will be useful to policymakers in many developing countries wishing to learn from the Malaysian experience.

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cold, SARS has no obvious cause or cure, nor is there any medical intervention that can help to mitigate the disease once it establishes itself in the host. The spread of the virus has been wonderfully documented in this lucid and balanced study, which acknowledges the lack of data about the virus which affected the first human being on 16 November 2002 in Guangdong province, southern China.

Lee and Warner have divided their multi-disciplinary study into three parts. The first places the SARS contagion into a historical context, underscoring the fact that SARS has not been a big killer compared to World War Two, the Black Death, or the Spanish Flu (Figure 2.3 sets out these parameters with great clarity), without minimising the importance of surveillance and containment. The second part is a detailed analysis of the epidemic in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, while the third looks at the ‘lessons to be learnt’ from SARS. These latter two sections of the monograph lead the reader to conclude that, without the strict measures introduced as a result of international cooperation between many national governments and the World Health Organisation (WHO), SARS might have been catastrophic at a global level. By implication, if SARS or some other unknown and virulent agent were to appear, the risks of international contagion remain extreme.

The key lessons to emerge from this study are: first, the necessity of national governments remaining transparent in acknowledging and monitoring disease outbreaks; and second, the need to share that information at a global level so that rapid and appropriate international responses are feasible. The containment of infected and suspected cases at the national level must be matched with the imposition of international quarantine. Above all, SARS, or any other epidemic, must avoid becoming an instrument of political ambition.

The politicisation of SARS is documented in Part Two, a case study of the People’s Republic of China. From mid-February to mid-March 2003, the Chinese government continued to deny that ‘atypical pneumonia’ (the name for this strange disease before it was labelled as SARS) had constituted a problem. Denial coincided with the WHO declaration that the disease had surfaced in Canada and Europe. The eventual willingness of the PRC in April 2003 to acknowledge that they had mishandled the health crisis constituted not only an important breakthrough in the containment of the epidemic, but also provided a critical lesson for the future—if the powerful Chinese government could not stop local whistleblowers, then no government in the world could.

The country-case studies in Part Two provide a detailed analysis of the economic impact of SARS on East Asia. Drawing together a diverse range of information, they argue that as the region’s prosperity increased, the services sector grew—especially tourism, hotels, and international and domestic travel businesses. The services sector typically requires greater domestic and international labour mobility, and it is this mobility that helped to disseminate SARS. Moreover, Lee and Warner show that the greater a country’s dependency on services the greater the negative economic fallout from SARS. We can surmise that the East Asian growth trajectory will continue to depend on the expansion of the services sector, thereby exposing national economies to the economic and other vulnerabilities revealed by SARS. This is why the work of Lee and Warner is as relevant to security specialists as it is to scholars, scientists and business people. If we are to confront a similar, future contagion in a manner that is speedy, saves lives, contains domestic panic, and prevents the international economy from being destabilised, we can benefit by studying the SARS epidemic of 2002–04 and preparing appropriate responses now. One question remains: how many governments today have strategies in place to contain SARS-like infections?

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