

# Using Mexican food to reach Malaysians

**ART OF THE JOB:** A diplomat's role is to set the table for others to become active players

**T**HE best way to describe Lourdes Sosa Marquez, the top Mexican diplomat in Malaysia, is that she is a communicator par excellence who wants to enhance understanding between Mexico City and Kuala Lumpur.

After all, the charge de affairs of the embassy came here to Malaysia with communication skills honed to perfection after two years of dealing with the press in Japan, an exacting experience for anyone, given cultural complexities and linguistic hurdles.

"I was the cultural and information officer at our embassy and it gave me very good experience in dealing with the press.

"I believe in connecting people," the deputy head of mission here, also the latest diplomat on the scene, says in a recent interview at her office at Menara Tan and Tan.

Of course, it helped that she spoke a little Japanese that she picked up after marrying Alejandro Takeda, a third-generation Mexican of Japanese descent, which she

## DIPLOMATIC DESPATCHES

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**Balan Moses**  
is a veteran journalist  
with a keen interest  
in diplomacy



developed over the six years that she spent from 2006 at the mission in Japan.

"My priority is to bring our two people closer. Once you do this, everything else follows.

"A diplomat's role is to set the table for others to become active players," she says, adding that she did this soon after arrival last October with a visiting team of Mexican businessmen interested in Malaysian palm oil.

There is more on the table with a team of Mexican businessmen possibly coming here soon after attending the Oct 8 Asia-Pacific Eco-

nomic Cooperation (Apec) meeting in Jakarta.

"This will be one of the seeds of contact between the business communities on both sides," she says.

The 45-year-old Marquez, who has an 11-year-old son, Carlos, in international school here, admits to being a little biased about Malaysia as she was in charge of Malaysia in a previous job where she oversaw Mexican interests in Southeast Asia.

"I was not expecting the feeling of being at home here. Malaysians are as easy-going as Mexicans," says the 171cm envoy who turns heads with her height and looks as she talks about the forthcoming two-week Mexican food festival at the InterContinental Hotel in Kuala Lumpur from April 1.

Marquez says it was the Malaysian ambassador to Mexico, Datuk Jamaiyah Mohamad Yusof, who went the extra mile in making the event possible after receiving an email from her.

"Food is culture. We want to educate Malaysians on Mexico by first introducing our food," she says adding that this could be a platform for greater interaction between Mexicans and Malaysians.

Marquez is excited about another project that will enhance bilateral ties: a book being written by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in Bahasa Malaysia about the history of Mexico.

"This is an excellent effort to help



Lourdes Sosa Marquez **admits to being a little partial** to Malaysia.

create understanding between our two people. History can teach us a lot about each other," she says, adding that a memorandum of understanding on tourism was also on the cards.

There more to look forward to.

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There is also some interest among Malaysian corporations looking at tapping infrastructure projects being undertaken by the Mexican government.

When is the new ambassador arriving here to replace Jorge Alberto Lozoya who left recently?

"There is no news yet of who will be coming.

"This takes time as both countries have to come to an agreement on the nominee," she says, adding that she is ready for the long haul ahead.

Marques has "Malaysian" assistance in her mission to bring both countries closer by way of Paula Gallegos, her personal assistant, who completed her master's degree in literature at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

Malaysia-Mexico relations can be expected to soar to new heights on a platform of new business possibilities, people-to-people communication and diplomatic contact in time to come.