

# **PRE DEPARTURE TRAINING MANUAL**

For Intending Emigrants

**MALAYSIA**

## **Part – I**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR OVERSEAS MIGRANTS**

#### **Definition**

Emigration, in this context, means the departure of any person from India with a view to taking up any employment (whether or not under an agreement or other arrangements to take up such employment, with or without the assistance of a registered Recruiting Agent or employer) in any country or place outside India.

#### **The Present Situation**

Every year hundreds of thousands of Indians emigrate in search of job. The effect of economic liberalization in India is visible on labour migration too. One of the striking features of labour migration from India is that more than 90 percent of the total outflow is to the Middle East.

#### **The Emigration Act**

The Emigration Act, 1983, seeks to safeguard the interests and ensure the welfare of emigrants. Only the recruiting agents registered with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs are eligible as per the Act to conduct the business of recruitment for overseas employment and they are required to obtain proper Registration Certificates (RC) from the Protector General of Emigrants.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, administers the Emigration Act through the eight offices of Protector of Emigrants (POEs). The offices are located at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Chandigarh, Cochin, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram.

#### **Service Charge**

No recruiting agent shall collect from the worker the charges more than the equivalent of his wages for forty-five days as offered under the employment contract, subject to a maximum of twenty thousand rupees, in respect of the services provided and shall issue a receipt to that worker for the amount collected in this regard.

#### **Emigration Check Required (ECR) Category**

Categories of persons, whose passports have been endorsed as “Emigration Check Required” (ECR), if intending to travel to an ECR country (Listed on page 3) for employment purposes, are required to obtain emigration from the Protector of Emigrants (POEs) either directly or through the recruitment agents or through the employer concerned.

#### **Emigration Check Not Required (ECNR) Category**

Section 22 of the Emigration Act, 1983 provides that no citizen of India shall migrate unless he obtains authorization from the concerned POE in the prescribed manner and form. However, with a view to facilitating the movement of the workers, 13 categories of persons (listed later in this chapter) have been exempted from this requirement and have been placed under “Emigration Check Not Required” (ECNR) category. Such persons are not required to obtain any emigration clearance from the offices of POEs before seeking employment abroad.

### **Countries with ECR / ECNR status**

There are total of 175 countries (called as ECNR countries) do not require emigration clearance, whereas 17 countries are listed as emigration check required countries, they are listed below:

### **List of Countries for which Emigration Clearance is Required (ECR)**

1. Afghanistan
2. Bahrain
3. Indonesia
4. Iraq
5. Jordan
6. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
7. Kuwait
8. Lebanon
9. Libya
10. Malaysia
11. Oman
12. Qatar
13. Sudan
14. Syria
15. Thailand
16. United Arab Emirates
17. Yemen

### **List of Persons/Categories of Workers in whose case Emigration Check is Not Required**

1. All holders of Diplomatic/ Official Passports
2. All Gazetted Government Servants
3. All Income-tax payers (including agricultural income tax payers) in their individual capacity
4. All professional degree holders, such as Doctors holding MBBS degrees or Degrees in Ayurveda or Homeopathy; Accredited journalists; Engineers; Chartered Accountants; Lecturers; Teachers; Scientists; Advocates etc.
5. Spouses and dependent children of category of persons listed from (2) to (4).
6. Persons holding class 10 qualification or higher degrees.
7. Seamen who are in possession of CDC or Sea Cadets, Desk Cadets (i) who have passed final examination of three year B.Sc. Nautical Sciences Courses at

T S Chanakya, Mumbai; and (ii) who have undergone three months pre-sea training at any of the government approved Training Institutes such as T S Chanakya, T S Rehman, T S Jawahar, MTI (SCI) and NIPM, Chennai after production of identity cards issued by the Shipping Master, Mumbai/ Kolkata/ Chennai

8. Persons holding permanent immigration visas, such as the visas of UK, USA and Australia.
9. Persons possessing two years' diploma from any institute recognized by the national Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) or State Council of Vocational Training (SCVT) or persons holding three years' diploma/equivalent degree from institutions like polytechnics recognized by Central/State Governments.
10. Nurses possessing qualifications recognized under the Indian Nursing Council Act, 1947.
11. All persons above the age of 50 years.
12. All persons who have been staying abroad for more than three years (the period of three years could be either in one stretch or broken) and spouses.
13. Children below 18 years of age.

### **Guidelines for Emigration Clearance**

The procedure for emigration clearance has been simplified. Emigration clearance to individuals/groups is granted on the same day on which the application is made at any of the offices of the Protector of Emigrants (POE).

### **Procedure for Emigration Clearance**

- 1) Emigration clearance will be made on the passport when the individual approaches either directly or through a registered Recruiting Agent or through the employer concerned.
- 2) In cases in which the profession indicated in visa does not tally with the profession indicated in the passport, an affidavit may be obtained from the Recruiting Agent/Employer concerned.
- 3) No clearance may be given for Iraq unless specifically authorized by Indian Embassy in Iraq.
- 4) No emigration clearance shall be granted for recruiting Indian nationals for any Foreign Employer placed in 'Prior Approval Category' (PAC)

### **Applying for Emigration Clearance**

The application for emigration clearance should be made in the prescribed form with prescribed particulars by the applicant directly or through a Recruiting Agent or through the employer concerned to the POE.

### **Documents required for Semi-Skilled Workers**

Semi-skilled individuals who seek emigration clearance directly from the Protectors of Emigrants (and not through Recruiting Agents) are required to produce the following documents in original for scrutiny and return:

- 1) Passport valid for a minimum period of six months with valid visa.
- 2) Employment contract from foreign employer duly attested by the Indian Mission.
- 3) Challan towards deposit of prescribed fee.
- 4) Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy

### **Documents required for Unskilled Workers**

Unskilled workers and women (not below 30 years of age) seeking employment abroad as housemaids/ domestic workers shall continue to furnish (in original) the following documents at the time of obtaining emigration clearance:

- 1) Passport valid for a minimum period of six months with valid Visa.
- 2) Work agreement from the foreign employer duly attested by the Indian Mission and signed by employer and employee or Permission letter from the concerned Indian Mission/ Post.
- 3) Challan towards deposit of prescribed fee.
- 4) Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy
- 5) Approval of the Ministry, if the female worker is below 30 years of age.

### **Documents required for Emigration Clearance (Through Project Exporter)**

1. Valid Passport (Valid for at least 6 months)
2. Valid visa in English language.
3. Permit issued by Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, with effective date of validity.
4. Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy
5. Valid Bank Guarantee

The Protector of Emigrants (POE) shall, after satisfying himself about the accuracy of the particulars mentioned in the application and in the other documents submitted along with the application, grants emigration clearance in the prescribed manner and form. In case there is any deficiency, the POE shall intimate the same by order in writing to the applicant or, as the case may be, the Recruiting Agent or employer, through whom the applications have been made about the deficiencies and require him to make good such deficiencies within such time as may be specified in the order or reject the application.

### Details of the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY)

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY) was started in 2003. The PBBY was upgraded as the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana, 2006 to provide broader coverage to the emigrant workers.
- The scheme has been further modified in 2008. The emigrant workers get a minimum insurance cover of Rs. 10 lakhs (instead of Rs. 5 lakhs) and the policy will be for the period of employment contract, i.e. either 2 years or 3 years as the case may be. The reduced premium along with other benefits have been made effective from 01.04.08.
- A comparative statement of PBBY 2006 and PBBY 2008 is as under:

Item	PBBY 2006	PBBY 2008
Minimum sum for which insured under PBBY	Rs. 5.00 Lakhs	Rs. 10.00 Lakhs
Hospitalization (Medical Expenses) Covering injuries / sickness / ailment / diseases	Rs. 50,000/-	Rs. 75,000/-
Repatriation covers for medical unfit	Actual one-way economy class air fare	Actual one-way economy class air fare
Family Hospitalization in India	Rs. 25,000/-	Rs. 50,000/-
Maternity	Rs. 20,000/-	Rs. 25,000/-
Attendant	Actual one-way economy class air fare	Actual one-way economy class air fare
Legal Expenses	Rs. 25,000/-	Rs. 30,000/-
Actual Premium to be charged (without any hidden costs)	Rs. 475/- for the contract period	Rs. 275/- for 2 years policy period. Rs. 375/- for 3 years policy period.

### This policy is available from undernoted Insurance Companies:-

1. Oriental Insurance Company Ltd.
2. United Insurance Company Ltd.
3. National Insurance Company Ltd.
4. ICICI Lombard.
5. Star Health & Allied Insurance Co. Ltd.
6. IFFCO Tokyo
7. Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Co. Ltd.
8. Reliance General Insurance Co. Ltd.

### Claim Procedure

Insured worker is supposed to have the copy of PBBY insurance policy with him. Name of the nominee is so mentioned on the policy, in view of the eventuality of death of insured.

In the event of claim, insured worker/claimant has to lodge a claim under the policy, with the respective insurance company's office wherefrom the policy was issued, if not specifically provided by the insurance company otherwise. While doing so, claimant has to indicate the policy number and details of accident. In the event of death, nominee has to lodge the claim.

After intimation of reported claim, insurance company intimates the insured/claimant the details of documents required to settle the claim. After processing such requisite documents, claim amount is paid to the insured worker/claimant, as the case may be.

### **Do's and Don't Do's**

In the Malaysia, laws demand that you must not move about in public without your Labour cards. Labour cards are identity cards issued to all expatriates soon after they settle down on their jobs.

Malaysia does not allow change in job sponsorship, but only after prior permission is obtained.

- The emigrant workers must get their service agreements prepared in both English and Arabic. They should not part with their passports and copies of the service contracts.
- Non-payment or delayed payment of wages could be reported to Indian missions, for redressal of grievances.
- Workers are given gratuity equivalent to 21 days' wages for every completed year of service.

### **Verification of the genuineness of visa/an employment documents**

The matter may be referred to the Embassy of India in the destination country, if necessary, with full particulars of the sponsor company (Name, Address, Telephone and Fax No.) which issued the visa, along with Passport particulars.

### **Fate of Indian Nationals with 'Visit visa'**

Some companies issue 'Visit Visa' (commercial 'visit visa') to meet their urgent manpower requirement for short-term work. After the work is finished, workers are allowed to come back to the home country. In case the employer needs them for further period; employer may arrange employment visa for such workers.

Visit visa is different from employment visa and it is not covered by the labour laws of the destination countries. Therefore visit visa workers do not have legal rights.

### **Employment Contract**

Indian workers are advised to obtain written contract duly signed by the sponsor / employer company before their arrival in the destination country.

The official language of the contract recognized by the Gulf countries is Arabic. In a bilingual contract (English and Arabic), the Arabic version prevails in case of any dispute on the clauses of the contract.

## **Essential terms for a contract**

The contract should contain all-important terms of employment as per 15(2) of Emigration Rules.

- (i) Period of employment/place of employment;
- (ii) Wages and other conditions of service;
- (iii) Free food or food allowance provision;
- (iv) Free accommodation;
- (v) Provision in regard to disposal, or transportation to India, of dead body of the emigrant;
- (vi) Working hours, overtime allowance, other working conditions, leave and social security benefits as per local labour laws;
- (vii) To-and-fro air-passage at the employers' cost; and
- (viii) Mode of settlement of disputes;

## **Obtaining copy of the contract while in India**

As per the instructions of the Government of India, recruitment agents are expected to provide a copy of employment contract to each worker before his/her departure. To safeguard his/her own interest, an individual worker has to demand from the recruitment agent a copy of the duly signed contract before departure. Complaints may be lodged against defaulting agencies with the nearest Protector of Emigrants.

## **Important Documents**

In addition to all the originals, copies of the following documents may be retained with the employee.

1. Employment contract,
2. Passport,
3. Visa and
4. Certificates of educational qualification

## **Guidelines for those Emigrating through RAs**

- Be sure of your Recruiting Agent. Ask him to show his Registration Certificate issued by the Protector General of Emigrants, Govt. of India. Do not deal with him unless he is registered and the registration is valid. In case of doubt, check with any of the offices of the Protectors of Emigrants (POEs) or the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE).
- DO NOT deal with sub-agents as they are not permitted under the Emigration Act, 1983 and Rules.
- Ask the Recruiting Agent to show you the Demand Letter and Power of Attorney from the foreign employer.
- Also carefully go through the Employment Contract detailing the salary/wage levels and other service conditions.



- DO NOT pay the Agent anything other than the service charge more than the equivalent of his wages for forty-five days as offered in the employment contract, subject to a maximum of twenty thousand.
- Make payments preferably by Demand Draft or Cheque and obtain a receipt.

Complaints of overcharging or cheating can be lodged with the concerned POE or with the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE).

### **Check before Departure**

- Ensure you have a valid Passport at least for six months. A valid Visa must be either stamped on or accompany your Passport. Always keep a photocopy of your Passport and Visa.
- You must possess a copy of the Employment Contract signed by you and your foreign employer duly attested by the registered recruiting agent.
- Insist on a copy of Employment Contract in English duly authenticated by the recruiting agent.
- Open a Savings Bank N.R.E. Account in one of the Banks in India to enable you to send your remittances from abroad.
- Get familiar with local labour laws, working and living conditions of the country of employment. Keep complete address of the Indian Embassy there, with you.

### **In the Country of your Employment**

- Obtain a Resident Permit or Identity Card, Labour Card.
- DO NOT part with your Passport and copy of Employment Contract signed by you in India.
- DO NOT sign any other Employment Contract or any blank paper.
- DO NOT strike work or resort to agitations. These are illegal under Malaysia's labour laws. You could be arrested, imprisoned and also deported.
- AVOID all contacts that may result in AIDS – a dreaded disease.
- Keep in touch with the nearest Indian Mission and report any complaints about non-payment or delayed payment of wages or compensations or any other problem to the Indian Mission.

### **Customs Formalities**

- Personal baggage – Customs checking is VERY STRICT. Kindly co-operate with the Customs staff at the International Airport.
- Ensure that you do not carry any narcotics or alcoholic drinks. Alcohol is strictly prohibited. Its consumption is a serious offence attracting severe punishment.
- DO NOT accept any unchecked parcel from any one. If you have to take a parcel for someone, check thoroughly that it does not contain alcohol or narcotics. Otherwise, it may land you in serious difficulties on arrival in the country of employment.

## **Precautions**

- You must make and keep a photocopy of all the pages of your Passport. DO NOT lose your Passport or its photocopy.
- In case you misplace your Passport, inform the nearest Indian Mission immediately giving them details, i.e. Passport number, date and place of issue, your name and date of your entry in to the country of employment. You can give these details only if you keep a photocopy of your Passport.
- DO NOT lose your copy of Employment Contract. Make photocopies and keep them with you always.
- You must have a full name, address, telephone/fax number of your foreign employer, before you leave India.
- If you have difficulty in locating your foreign employer, contact the nearest Indian Mission immediately.
- DO NOT accept temporary or permanent employment with another person or establishment other than the sponsoring Company/ establishment/ person. Employment with persons other than your original sponsor is strictly prohibited and attracts severe punishment.
- Before the Visa or Employment Contract expires, get them renewed. If you are returning to India for a short while during the tenure of your Employment Contract abroad, ensure that the validity period of Visa does not expire before you return to the country of employment.
- Ensure also that your Passport is valid. Get it revalidated from the concerned Indian Mission abroad or from the Regional Passport Office (RPO) in India, at least two months before its expiry.

## **High Commission of India, Kuala Lumpur**

No. 2, Jalan Taman Duta,  
Off Jalan Duta,  
50480 Kuala Lumpur,  
Malaysia.

Telephone : 00-603-20933504, 20933509 to 11,  
20931015  
Fax : 00-603-20933507 (HC Office) 20925826 (Admn)  
E-Mail : hc@indianhighcommission.com.my (HC);  
dhc@indianhighcommission.com.my (DHC);  
cpol@indianhighcommission.com.my (Pol & Admin);  
cpic@indianhighcommission.com.my (PIC & Community  
Affairs)

Website : [www.indianhighcommission.com.my/index.php](http://www.indianhighcommission.com.my/index.php)

## **Important Contacts**

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs  
Government of India  
Akbar Bhavan,  
Chanakya Puri,  
New Delhi-110021

Telephone No 91-11-24197900  
Fax No: 91-11-24197919.  
Email: [info@moia.nic.in](mailto:info@moia.nic.in)

Shri Vayalar Ravi  
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Ph. (O) 91-11-24676836 / 37 / 39  
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Dr. A. Didar Singh  
Secretary,  
Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs

Ph: 91-11-24674143 / 44  
Fax: 91-11-24674140  
Email : secretary@moia.nic.in

Shri Karan A. Singh  
Protector General of Emigrants  
Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs

Ph: 91-11-26874250  
Fax: 91-11-24197984  
Email: pge@moia.nic.in

### **List of Offices of Protector of Emigrants in India**

1. Protector of Emigrants, New Delhi  
Jaisalmer House, Canteen Block,  
Mansingh Road, New Delhi 110001.  
Ph. 011 – 23382472  
Fax 011 – 23073908
2. Protector of Emigrants Bombay,  
Building E, Khira Nagar,  
S V Road, Santa Cruz (West), Mumbai, 400054.  
Ph. 022 – 26614393  
Fax: 022 – 26614353
3. Protector of Emigrants Thiruvananthapuram,  
Sugandh, 24/846 (1), Thycaud,  
Thiruvananthapuram – 695014.  
Ph. 0471 – 2741790
4. Protector of Emigrants Kochi,  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Putharikal Building,  
Market Road, Kochi 682035.  
Ph. 0484 – 2360187
5. Protector of Emigrants, Chennai,  
TNHB, Ashok Nagar Shopping Complex (Annexe)  
Ashok Nagar, Chennai 600083,  
Ph. 044 – 24891337
6. Protector of Emigrants Chandigarh,  
Kendriya Sadan  
Fifth Block, Ground Floor,  
Sector 9A, Chandigarh- 160017.  
Ph. 0172 – 2741790
7. Protector of Emigrants Kolkata,  
Room No: 18, A-Wing,  
3rd Floor, M S O Building, D F Block,  
Salt Lake, Kolkata 700084.  
Ph. 033 – 23343407

8. Protector of Emigrants Hyderabad,  
Gruhkalpa, Ground Floor  
Opposite to Gandhi Bhawan,  
Nampally, Hyderabad.  
Ph: 040 - 24652557

#### **Information Available on the Website of MOIA**

- Revised emigration requirements
- Recruiting agents having suspended RC
- Online emigration clearance system
- List of Registered recruiting agents with valid RC at [poeonline.gov.in](http://poeonline.gov.in)
- Internal watch-list of recruiting agents
- Recruiting agents having cancelled RC
- Foreign employers on PAC
- Project Exporters at [poeonline.gov.in](http://poeonline.gov.in)
- Emigration Act, 1983
- Emigration Rules, 1983
- Pravsi Bharatiya Bima Yojana
- Redressal of Public Grievances Information on Recruiting Agents and Black Listed Foreign Employers
- Guidelines for recruiting agents/guidelines for prospective Emigrant workers.

#### **Consultation with Public**

PGE conduct the Public Hearings in the office of the Protector of Emigrants, Jaisalmer House, Canteen Block, Mansingh Road, New Delhi between 3.00 PM to 4.00 PM. on all Tuesday where members of public could come with their grievances/suggestions without any appointment.

#### **Information under RTI Act**

For information (under the RTI Act, 2005) citizens may approach the Public Information Officer (RTI) of Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs available from 10:00 hrs to 13:00 hrs on each day (except Monday and Friday). The information pertaining to MOIA is also available on the MOIA Website (<http://www.moia.gov.in>) in detail. Further, the citizens may also approach the PIO (RTI) using email addresses [dsfs@moia.nic.in](mailto:dsfs@moia.nic.in) & [dsemigration@moia.nic.in](mailto:dsemigration@moia.nic.in)

## **Part – II**

### **MALAYSIA**

#### **Introduction**

Malaysia is one of south-east Asia's most vibrant economies. Its multi-ethnic, multi-religious society encompasses a majority Muslim population in most of its states and an economically-powerful Chinese community. Consisting of two regions separated by about 640 miles of the South China Sea, Malaysia is a federation of 13 states and three federal territories. It is one of the region's key tourist destinations, offering excellent beaches and colourful scenery. Dense rainforests in the eastern states of Sarawak and Sabah on the island of Borneo, are a refuge for wildlife and tribal traditions.

Ethnic Malays comprise about 60% of the population. Chinese constitute around 26%; Indians and indigenous peoples make up the rest. The communities coexist in relative harmony, although there is little racial interaction. Although since 1971 Malays have benefited from positive discrimination in business, education and the civil service, ethnic Chinese continue to wield much economic power and form the wealthiest community. The Malays remain the dominant group in politics while the Indians are among the poorest.

The country is among the world's biggest producers of computer disk drives, palm oil, rubber and timber. It has a state-owned automobile industry, Proton. Tourism is already thriving and has still considerable room for expansion.

Malaysia's human rights record has come in for international criticism. Internal security laws allow suspects to be detained without charge or trial.

#### **Malaysia: Some Basic Information**

- Full name: Federation of Malaysia
- Population: 25.3 million (UN, 2005)
- Capital: Kuala Lumpur
- Area: 329,847 sq km
- Major languages: Malay (official), English, Chinese dialects, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam
- Major religions: Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism
- Life expectancy: 71 years (men), 75 years (women)
- Monetary unit: 1 ringgit = 100 sen
- Main exports: Electronic equipments, petroleum and liquefied natural gas, chemicals, palm oil, wood and wood products, rubber, textiles
- Internet domain: .my
- International dialing code: +60

## **Geography**

The two distinct parts of Malaysia, separated from each other by the South China Sea, share a largely similar landscape in that both West and East Malaysia feature coastal plains rising to often densely forested hills and mountains, the highest of which is Mount Kinabalu at 4,095.2 metres (13,435.7 ft) on the island of Borneo. The local Climate is equatorial and characterised by the annual southwest (April to October) and northeast (October to February) monsoons.

The Strait of Malacca, lying between Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia is said to be the most important shipping lane in the world.

*Putrajaya* is the newly constructed administrative capital of the federal state of Malaysia, aimed in part to ease growing congestion within Malaysia's capital city, Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur remains the seat of parliament, as well as the commercial and financial capital of the country. Other major cities include Georgetown, Ipoh, Johor Bahru, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, Alor Star and Malacca Town.

## **The Economy**

The Malay Peninsula and indeed Southeast Asia has been a centre of trade for centuries. Various items such as porcelain and spice were actively traded even before Malacca and Singapore rose to prominence.

Over time, Malaya became the world's largest producer of tin, rubber, and palm oil. Instead of relying entirely on the local Malays as a source of labour, the British brought in also Chinese and Indians to work on the mines and plantations. Although many of them returned to their respective home countries after their agreed tenure ended, some remained in Malaysia and settled permanently.

In the 1970s, Malaysia began to imitate the footsteps of the Asian Tigers and committed itself to a transition from being reliant on mining and agriculture to an economy that depended more on manufacturing. With Japanese investment, heavy industries flourished and in a matter of a few years, exports became the country's primary growth engine. Malaysia consistently achieved more than 7% GDP growth along with low inflation in the 1980s and the 1990s.

## **Natural resources**

Malaysia is well-endowed with natural resources in areas such as agriculture, forestry as well as minerals. Malaysia is the world's primary exporter of natural rubber and palm oil, which together with saw logs and sawn timber, cocoa, pepper, pineapple and tobacco dominate the growth of the sector. Palm oil is also a major foreign exchange earner.

Regarding forestry resources, logging began to make a substantial contribution to the economy only during the nineteenth century. Today approximately 59% of Malaysia is covered by forests. The rapid expansion of the timber industry, particularly after the 1960s, has brought about a serious erosion problem in the country's forest resources. However, in line with the Government's commitment to protect the environment and the ecological system, forestry resources are being managed on a sustainable basis and accordingly the rate of tree felling has been on the decline.

Rubber, once the mainstay of the Malaysian economy, has been largely replaced by oil palm as Malaysia's leading agricultural export. Tin and petroleum are the two main non-agricultural resources that are of major significance in the Malaysian economy. Malaysia was once the world's largest producer of tin until the collapse of the tin market in the early

1980s. It was only in 1972 that petroleum and natural gas overtook tin as the mainstay of the mining sector. Meanwhile, the contribution by tin has declined. Petroleum and natural gas which were discovered in oilfields offshore Sabah, Sarawak and Terengganu have contributed much to the Malaysian economy particularly in those three states.

### **Transport and Communication**

Malaysia has extensive roads that connect all major cities and towns on the western coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The major expressway namely the North-South Expressway, spans the northern and the southern tips of Peninsular Malaysia at Bukit Kayu Hitam and Johor Baru.

Roads in East Malaysia and eastern coast of Peninsular Malaysia are relatively undeveloped. In many cases, the roads still remain gravel roads.

The railway system in West Malaysia is operated by the Keretapi Tanah Melayu (Malayan Railways) which has extensive railroads that connect all major cities and towns on the peninsula, including Singapore.

The major sea ports of Malaysia are Tanjong Kidurong, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Kuantan, Pasir Gudang, Tanjung Pelepas, Penang, Port Klang, Sandakan and Tawau.

There are also world class airports, such as Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, Bayan Lepas International Airport in Penang, Kuching International Airport and Langkawi International Airport that provide flights connecting international and domestic destinations.

The intercity telecommunication service is provided mainly by microwave radio relay. International telecommunications are provided through submarine cables and satellite. Telekom is one of the largest and most significant telecommunication companies in Malaysia.

### **Governance**

Malaysia follows a system of constitutional monarchy. The head of the federal state of Malaysia is commonly referred to as the King of Malaysia. The king is elected to a five-year term from among the nine hereditary Sultans of the Malay states; the other four states, which have titular Governors, do not participate in the selection.

The system of government in Malaysia is closely modelled on that of Westminster parliamentary system, a legacy of British colonial rule. In practice, however, more power is vested in the executive branch of government than in the legislative, and the judiciary has been weakened by sustained attacks by the government during the Mahathir era. Since independence in 1957, Malaysia has been governed by a multi-party coalition known as the Barisan Nasional (formerly known as the Alliance).

Legislative power is divided between federal and state legislatures. The bicameral parliament consists of the lower house, the House of Representatives or Dewan Rakyat (literally the "Chamber of the People") and the upper house, the Senate or Dewan Negara (literally the "Chamber of the Nation"). The 219-member House of Representatives is elected from single-member constituencies based on population for a maximum term of 5 years. All the 70 Senators enjoy a 3-year term; 26 are elected by the 13 state assemblies, 2 representing the federal territory of Kuala Lumpur, 1 each from federal territories of Labuan and Putrajaya, and 40 are appointed by the king. Besides the Parliament at the federal level, each state has a unicameral state legislative chamber (Malay: *Dewan Undangan Negeri*) whose members are elected from single-member constituencies.

Parliamentary elections are held at least once every five years. The cabinet is chosen from among members of both the houses of Parliament and is responsible to those bodies.

The state governments are led by chief ministers, selected by the state assemblies advising their respective sultans or governors.

Malaysia has some of the toughest censorship laws in the world. The government exerts substantial control over the media and restrictions may be imposed in the name of national security. It is keen to insulate the largely-Muslim population from what it considers harmful foreign influences. News is subject to censorship, entertainment shows and music videos regularly fall foul of the censors, and scenes featuring swearing and kissing are routinely removed from TV programmes and films.

### **Demography**

Malaysia's population is comprised of many ethnic groups, with the politically dominant Malays making up the majority. By constitutional definition, all Malays are Muslims. About 25% of the population are Malaysians of Chinese descent, who have historically played an important role in trade and business. Malaysians of Indian descent comprise about 8% of the population. About 90% of the Indian community is Tamil but various other groups also exist, including Malayalis, Punjabis and Gujaratis. Owing to the rise of labour-intensive industries, there are a million legal foreign workers and perhaps another million unauthorized foreigners. The state of Sabah alone has nearly 25% of its 3 million population listed as illegal foreign workers in the last census.

### **Religion and Religious Freedom**

Malaysia is a multi-religious society, and Islam is the country's official religion which accounts for 60% of the population.

Although the Malaysian constitution guarantees religious freedom, non-Muslims experience restrictions in several fields such as construction of places of worship and celebration of religious events.

Generally, Malaysians respect others' religious beliefs. However, political rivalries can create trouble.

Government in general supports the Islamic religious establishment and it is the official policy to "infuse Islamic values" into the administration of the country. However, Sunday which is the traditional Christian holiday is the official weekend holiday in Malaysia unlike in Middle Eastern Muslim countries.

Several religious holidays are recognized as official holidays, including Hari Raya Puasa (Muslim), Hari Raya Korban (Muslim), the Prophet's birthday (Muslim), Wesak Day (Buddhist), Deepavali (Hindu), Christmas (Christian), and, in Sabah and Sarawak, Good Friday (Christian).

### **Culture**

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. Malay is the national language of the country.

The largest non-Malay indigenous tribe is the Iban of Sarawak, who number over 600,000. Some Iban still live in traditional jungle villages. The Bidayuh (170,000) are



concentrated in the south-western part of Sarawak. The largest indigenous tribe in Sabah is the Kadazan. They are largely Christian subsistence farmers.

Indians in Malaysia are mainly Tamil Hindus from southern India. Others speak Telugu, Malayalam, and Hindi. They live mainly in the larger towns on the west coast of the peninsula. Many middle to upper-middle class Indians in Malaysia also speak English as the first language. There is also a sizable Sikh community in Malaysia of over 83,000.

### **Citizenship**

All Malaysians are Federal citizens with no formal citizenship for each state with the exception that for states and the federal territory in East Malaysia state citizenship is a special privilege. Every citizen is issued a biometric smartchip identity card, known as Mykad, at the age of 12, which he is required to carry always. A citizen is required to present his/her identity card to the police, or in the case of an emergency, to any military personnel, to be identified. If the card cannot be produced immediately, the person technically has 24 hours under the law to produce it at the nearest police station.

### **The Media**

The TV sector comprises commercial networks and pay-TV operations. State-owned Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) operates two TV networks and many of the country's radio services. Private stations are on the air, broadcasting in Malay, Tamil, Chinese and English.

Newspapers must renew their publication licences annually, and the Home Minister has the authority to suspend or revoke publishing permits. The major newspapers of Malaysia are: New Straits Times, The Star, Business Times and The Malay Mail – all English-language dailies.

### **Acceptable public conduct: Do's and Dont's**

- Except for handshakes, no public contact between the sexes is allowed in Malaysia. Hugging and kissing in public - even between husband and wife - are discouraged. On the other hand, physical contact between people of the same sex is perfectly acceptable. Men may hold hands with men or even walk with their arms around each other. These actions are treated strictly as gestures of friendship.
- When meeting a Malay, you may be extended a hand for shaking; sometimes, the person may choose to greet you with a Malay greeting called a "namaste." This gesture involves touching both palms at heart level and making a slight bow. Sometimes the "namaste" will occur after an initial handshake. You may respond in turn by putting your right hand on your heart after shaking hands.
- When you (if a man) are being introduced to a Malaysian woman, be sure to shake hands with her only if she has extended her hand. If she does not extend her hand, a smile and a nod will be the gesture you should use to greet her. The 'namaste' is a respectful gesture that should be extended to women of all races.
- When introducing a man and a woman, the woman's name should be mentioned first.
- Just as in most other countries, when presenting a higher-ranking person to a junior person, the senior person's name is said first.

- Always refer to members of parliament as “Your Honourable.”
- The highest respect should always be shown to royalty. If you know you are going to meet a royal personage, be sure to take a gift. Stand with your hands at your sides, unless you are greeting the royal, in which case you must bow with your palms pressed together before you at chest level. Allow any member of royalty to depart from a room before you do.
- Out of deference, give a slight bow to elderly people you meet.
- When greeting a Malaysian in the morning, the term to use is “Selamat pagi. ” In the afternoon, the appropriate term is “Selamat petang.”
- Keep your hands out of your pockets when in public.
- When leaving a room, say “Excuse me” and add a slight bow.
- When you must indicate something or someone, use the entire right hand [palm out]. You can also point with your right thumb, as long as all four fingers are curled down. Make sure all your fingers are curled; older Malays would interpret a fist with the thumb and a little finger up as an insult.
- To beckon someone, hold your hand out, palm downward, and make a scooping motion with the fingers. Beckoning someone with the palm up and wagging one finger, however, will often be interpreted as an insult.
- It is considered rude to point at anyone with the forefinger. Please note that Malays use the forefinger only to point at animals.
- Pounding one fist into the palm of the other hand is another gesture that Malays frequently consider obscene; such gestures should be avoided.
- When passing an object, reaching for something or touching someone [such as shaking hands], do so with your right hand. The left hand is considered unclean and should not be used in contact with others while eating or passing things to others. This rule applies even if you are left-handed.
- The feet also are believed to be unclean. Consequently, never move or touch anything with your feet.
- Never point your feet at another person. You are expected to apologize whenever your shoes or feet touch another person. Don’t show the soles of your feet or shoes. This restriction determines how one sits. You can cross your legs at the knee, but not place one ankle on your knee. Never cross your legs in the presence of Malaysian royalty. Do not prop your feet upon anything not intended for the feet, such as a desk. Remove your shoes when entering a home or holy place. Shoes and hats must be removed before entering a mosque or temple. It is also considered good protocol to step over the threshold rather than on it.
- When going to a mosque or temple, dress conservatively. For women, dress should include long pants and/or skirts around the knees or longer, as well as tops with sleeves. Sleeveless tops should be avoided. Women should also have their heads covered. If other people put on a garment similar to a robe before entering, you should do the same.

- When pointing at a person or object, the appropriate way to do so is by extending your right hand with your thumb extended and fingers folded under.
- Be aware that Kuala Lumpur, the capital city, has harsh penalties against littering.
- Drug trafficking brings a mandatory death penalty.

### **Addressing others respectfully: General Guidelines**

Addressing Malaysians properly can be difficult. During an introduction, make it a point to repeat the title and name of the person; afterwards, ask if you are pronouncing everything correctly.

When you ask a Malaysian what you should call him or her, directly state what he or she should call you. Your Malaysian counterpart may be unsure as to which of your names is your surname. Follow the Malaysian's lead as to the degree of formality.

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy with nine royal houses. With so many royals, foreigners are likely to get confused. Titles and forms of address vary. The best strategy is to ask a native how a particular royal should be addressed.

### **Healthcare**

Malaysia places considerable importance on healthcare, which constitute 5% of the government social sector development budget. With a rising and aging population, the Government is committed to improving its healthcare system.

The Malaysian healthcare system makes it mandatory for doctors to put in 3 years' service in public hospitals. Recently foreign doctors have also been encouraged to take up employment here. There is still an acute shortage of medical workforce.

### **Holidays**

Malaysians observe a number of holidays and festivals throughout the year. Some holidays are federal public holidays while some are state public holidays observed by individual states.

The most celebrated holiday is the "Hari Merdeka" (Independence Day) which falls on August 31 commemorating the independence of the Federation of Malaya in 1957, while Malaya Day is celebrated only in the state of Sabah on September 16 to commemorate the formation of Malaysia in 1963. Hari Merdeka, as well as Labour Day (May 1), the King's Birthday (first Saturday of June) and some other festivals are federal public holidays.

Muslims in Malaysia (including all Malays and other non-Malay Muslims) celebrate Muslim holidays. The most celebrated festival, Hari Raya Puasa (also called *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*) is the Malay translation of Eid ul-Fitr. In addition to Hari Raya Puasa, they also celebrate Hari Raya Haji (also called *Hari Raya Aidiladha*), Awal Muharram (Islamic New Year) and Maulidul Rasul (Birthday of the Prophet).

Chinese in Malaysia typically celebrate festivals that are observed by Chinese around the world. Chinese New Year is the most celebrated among the festivals which lasts for fifteen days and ends with Chap Goh Mei. In addition to traditional Chinese festivals, Buddhist Chinese also celebrate Vesak Day.

The majority of Indians in Malaysia are Hindus and they celebrate Deepavali (Diwali), the festival of light.

Other holidays include Good Friday (East Malaysia only), and Christmas, which are observed by Christians. Although most of the festivals are identified with a particular ethnic group or religion, all Malaysians celebrate the festivals together regardless of their religion or ethnic background.

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