

Malaysia

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December 2003

SQ Morison

MALAYSIA



THE COUNTRY

Malaysia is made up of two geographical regions. Peninsular Malaysia or West Malaysia comprising of eleven states and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya and East Malaysia which has two states and the Federal Territory of Labuan.

The West Malaysian states are

Johor
Kedah
Kelantan
Melaka
Negeri Sembilan
Pahang
Penang
Perak
Perlis
Selangor
Terengganu

The East Malaysian states are

Sabah
Sarawak



Peninsular Malaysia is 7 degrees north of the equator and East Malaysia is situated on the island of Borneo. The two regions are separated by about 640 kilometres of the South China Sea.

The total land area is 329,733 square kilometres. Peninsular Malaysia has a land mass of 131,573 square kilometres (40%), Sarawak with a land mass of 124,449 square kilometres (37%) and Sabah with a land mass of 73,711 square kilometres (23%). 80% of the land area is covered by tropical rainforest.

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ITS' PEOPLE

Population

Malaysia has a population of approximately 24.79 million and 82% of them are in West Malaysia. Malaysia is a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural society.

Ethnic Composition

The Bumiputera (indigenous) population comprising of the Malays and the Aborigines account for about 65% with the Chinese at about 26%, Indians at about 7.7% and the balance of 1.3% represented by other races.

Religion

Islam is the national religion. However, the Constitution provides that every person has the right to profess and practise his own religion and also the right to propagate his faith, although the right to propagate other religions amongst the Muslims is prohibited. In addition to Islam other major religions are Christianity, Buddhism: Chinese religions; Hinduism and Sikhism.

Language

The official language is Bahasa Melayu (although the official language is often referred to as Bahasa Malaysia). English is widely used in business and Mandarin and other Chinese dialects, Hindi and Tamil, are also widely used.

The literacy rate in Malaysia is about 89%.

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CLIMATE

Malaysia is in the tropics and enjoys an equatorial climate. The average temperature is 32 degrees celsius in the day and 24 degrees celsius in the night. The humidity is high and averages 80%. This is due to the high temperature and high evaporation. Rainfall is common throughout the year with afternoon thunderstorm. The average annual rainfall is 2,500mm.



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POLITICS

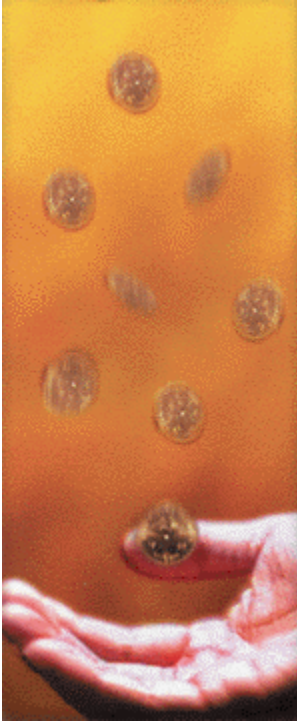
Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy and practises parliamentary democracy with a Constitution, the Judiciary, the Legislature and the Executive. It has a stable government since independence. The present governing party is the Barisan Nasional comprising of all the major political parties. The major political party is the United Malays National Organisation.

The Yang Di Pertuan Agong (the King) is elected by a Conference of Rulers comprising of all the hereditary rulers of the nine Malay sultanates for a term of five years.

Malaysia has diplomatic relations with over 100 countries and there are over 100 diplomatic missions in Kuala Lumpur.

For more information about the country, its government and government agencies visit the following website : <http://www.mymalaysia.net.my>

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ECONOMY

The economic policies and strategies of the country are set out in the National Vision Policy. These are implemented through the Outline Perspective Plan (Third Outline Perspective Plan – 2001 – 2010). The current action plan is the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001 - 2005). The average growth during the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996 – 2000) is 4.7% per annum. Growth is expected to be 5% per annum for the Eighth Malaysia Plan.

Over a seven years period to 1997 Malaysia enjoyed an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 8%. Unfortunately adverse economic events in 1997 resulted in a contraction in 1998 and a slower than expected growth in 1999, 2000 and 2001. The GDP for 2002 is 4.2% amounting to RM361.6 billion and the per capita GDP stands at RM13,359.

For the last five years inflation averages 5% with unemployment at 3.5%. The economic turmoil of 1997 – 1998 has resulted in a higher than average inflation rate and unemployment. For 2002 inflation stands at 1.7% and an unemployment rate of 3.2%.

The last decade saw an increased growth in the manufacturing and service sectors. In 2002 manufacturing account for 30.4% of the GDP, services account for 52.4%, mining account for 6.6%, construction account for 3.3% and agriculture drops to 8.7%. Manufacturing accounts for almost 75% of the country's exports. The main export continues to be electrical and electronic goods. Manufacturing includes agribusiness products which account for about 18% of the exports.

Intra regional trade is growing with the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement coming into effect. The major trading partners of Malaysia are ASEAN, the United States, Japan, the European Union and China.

Although manufacturing has overtaken agriculture as the main exports it remains an important economic sector in this resource rich country.

The major agricultural produce is as follows :

- Oil Palm (world's largest producer and exporter of palm oil)
- Rubber (a leading producer of natural rubber - 24% of the world market)
- Cocoa (world's fourth largest producer - 7% of the world market)
- Pepper (world's fourth largest producer - 17% of the world market)
- Tin (world's leading producer)

Other agricultural produce and minerals and resources are Pineapple, Rice, Coconut, Tobacco, Forestry and Timber, Fisheries, Livestock, Fruits and Petroleum and Natural Gas.

The currency is Ringgit Malaysia (RM). It is issued in notes of denominations of 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. There are coins of RM1, 50 sen, 20 sen, 10 sen, 5 sen and 1 sen.

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TRAVEL

Gateway to Malaysia

The major international air gateway into Malaysia is the Kuala Lumpur International Airport at Sepang, situated about 75 kilometres from the City of Kuala Lumpur. Other international airports are Penang and Johor Bahru in Peninsular Malaysia and Kuching and Kota Kinabalu in East Malaysia.

Peninsular Malaysia can be accessed by road and rail from Singapore in the south and Thailand in the north. The country has an extensive network of roads and toll-ways. Driving is on the left.

The major seaport is Port Klang, 48 kilometres from Kuala Lumpur.

Local Time



Standard Malaysian Time is 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean (GMT)

Electricity and Water

There is piped water and drinking from the tap is safe. Electricity supply is 240 volts and 50 cycles.

Working Day

Working days are from Mondays to Fridays and half-day on Saturdays with the exception of Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Terengganu where the working days are from Saturdays to Wednesdays and half-day on Thursday. (The working days for the state government of Kelantan and Terengganu are from Sunday to Thursday.) Banking hours during weekdays

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is between 9.30am to 4.00pm (or 10.00am to 3.00pm) and 9.30am to 11.30am on half-days.

Public Holidays

These have to be gazetted and there are many public holidays reflecting the multi-cultural and multi-religious society. On average there are about 16 days per annum and holidays differ from state to state.

Immigration

Travellers must possess valid travel documents. This also applies to travels between East and West Malaysia.

No visa is required for nationals of Commonwealth countries (except Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Nigeria).

No visa is required for a visit not exceeding more than one month for nationals of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) countries.

Generally nationals of other countries (other than specific country restrictions) are allowed to enter Malaysia without a visa for a visit not exceeding one month.

A Social or Tourist Visit is normally granted for a period of 14 days to three months.

Visas must be obtained before entering Malaysia.

Citizens of Israel are not allowed to enter Malaysia. Special approval must first be obtained.

Specific passes are required for employment, business or professional work in Malaysia.

Health

Yellow fever vaccination is required for all arrivals from infected areas and from Yellow Fever Endemic Zones.

Capital Punishment

The trafficking of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession of live ammunition and explosives are serious offences in Malaysia. Upon conviction, capital punishment (death) is the penalty for such crimes.

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