

Country Brief MALAYSIA



I Demographic Features of the Country

It is predominantly a Muslim nation but the influence of early Hindu rulers and their language, Sanskrit, is palpably present. According to 2000 Malaysian Census, 79.7% people live in urban centers and only 20.3% in the rural areas.

Capital: Kuala Lumpur

Population: 24,385,858 (July 2006 est.)

Age Structure: 0-14 years: 32.6% (male 4,093,859/female 3,862,730)

15-64 years: 62.6% (male 7,660,680/female 7,613,537)

65 years and over: 4.7% (male 509,260/female 645,792) (2006 est.)

Labour Force Participation: agriculture 14.5%, industry 36%, services 49.5% (2000 est.)

Language: Bahasa Melayu (official), English, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainan, Foochow), Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Panjabi, Thai

Ethnic Group: Malay 50.4%, Chinese 23.7%, Indigenous 11%, Indian 7.1%, others 7.8% (2004 est.)

Economy: Malaysia, a middle-income country, transformed itself from 1971 through the late 1990s from a producer of raw materials into an emerging multi-sector economy. Growth was almost exclusively driven by exports - particularly of electronics. As a result, Malaysia was hard hit by the global economic downturn and the slump in the information technology (IT) sector in 2001 and 2002. GDP in 2001 grew only 0.5% because of an estimated 11% contraction in exports, but a substantial fiscal stimulus package equal to US \$1.9 billion mitigated the worst of the recession, and the economy rebounded in 2002 with a 4.1% increase. The economy grew 4.9% in 2003, notwithstanding a difficult first half, when external pressures from Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Iraq War led to caution in the business community. Growth topped 7% in 2004 and 5% in 2005. As an oil and gas exporter, Malaysia has profited from higher world energy prices, although the cost of government subsidies for domestic gasoline and diesel fuel has risen and offset some of the benefit

II -Indian Diaspora

1 Size of Indian Diaspora:

Indians constitute seven percent of the population with Tamilians in the lead followed by Telugu, Malayalam and Punjabi speaking people. Indian comprises only 7.7% of the total Malaysian population or **1,680,132 (Malaysian Census, 2001)**. Other sources estimated that about there are 40,000 (including 3000 professionals) NRI and **PIO community** is about 2 million.

2 Geographical spread of the Indian Diaspora

The close correspondence between the ethnic and occupational divisions of the Indian community was inevitably reflected in the community's geographical distribution in Malaya. The South Indian Tamils are concentrated mainly in Perak, Selangor, and Negri Sembilan, on the rubber estates and railways, though a

significant proportion found employment on the docks in Penang. The Telegus were mainly on the rubber estates of Lower Perak and parts of Selangor, while the Malayalees were located predominantly in Lower Perak, Kuala Lumpur, parts of Negri Sembilan, and Johore Bahru. The business communities, the Gujeratis, Sindhis, Chettiars, and South Indian Muslims, were concentrated in the urban areas, principally Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Ipoh, and Singapore. The Ceylon Tamils were also mainly an urban community, though some were found in rural areas working as subordinate staff on the estates.

According to latest census, five States with a high density of Indians are Selangor (14.6% - 585,368); Perak (13%- 262,121); KL (11.4% -146,621); Penang (10.6% - 133,899) & Negeri Sembilan (16% -132,754). Indians are the second most urbanized community in Malaysia

3 Brief history of Diaspora

Large scale migration of Indians from the sub continent to Malaya followed the extension of British formal rule to the west coast Malay states in the 1870s. It is stated that it begun in 1834 and ended in 1920s. The overwhelming majority of the labour emigrants under indentured system were recruited from North India. These labour emigrants were taken to the British colonies. Then as early as 1901 the Indian population in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States was approximately 120,000, and by 1947 it had grown to almost 600,000 for Malaya and Singapore.' At the time of Independence of Malaysia in 1957 it stood at a little over 820,000. In this last year Indians accounted for approximately 11 per cent of the total population of Malaya and Singapore. Indian workers had no political interest in early years but got impetus following Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Malaysia in 1938 and the formation of Azad hind Fauz in Singapore

The overwhelming majority of migrants from India are Tamil speakers from the south India. In 1947 they represented approximately 77 per cent of the total

Indian population in Malaya and Singapore. Other South Indians, mainly Malayalee and Telegus, formed a further 14 per cent in 1947, and the remainder of the Indian community was accounted for by North Indians, principally Punjabis, Bengalis, Gujratis, and Sindhis.

4 Profile of Indian Diaspora

These ethnic divisions corresponded closely to occupational specialisation. For example the South Indian Tamils were predominantly labourers, the majority being employed on rubber estates, though a significant minority worked in Government public works departments. The Telegus were also mainly labourers on the estates, whilst the Malayalee community was divided into those who occupied relatively more skilled labouring positions on the estates and those who were white collar workers or professionals. The North Indians, with the exception of the Sikhs, were mainly merchants and businessmen. For example, the Gujeratis and Sindhis owned some of the most important textile firms in Malaya and Singapore. The [Sikhs](#) were either in the police or employed as watchmen. There were, in addition, three further ethnic and religious groups whose political and economic importance in Malaya far exceeded their numerical strength. Two were important business communities the Chettiars, a money lending caste from Madras, and the South Indian Muslims (Moplahs and Marakkayars) who were mainly wholesalers. The third group were the Ceylonese Tamils who were employed principally in the lower levels of the Civil Service and in the professions.

Indians have played significant role in economy of Malaysia and can be found almost every where. They major portion of the Indian community is engaged in rubber and palm plantations, a small section is involved in service like police, railways and food business as well as in the legal and medical professions. Being engaged in plantation labour, the major chunk of Indian community belonging to the older generation was either illiterate or had very little education. The recent

migration is of Indian IT professionals increased in early 21st century. Indians are not very economically very good reflected from Indian ownership in Malaysian National wealth which only 1.0 percent.

Indians have taken active part in Malaysian politics and risen to the rank of cabinet ministers. Malaysian Indian Congress formed in 1946 is a main component and

5 Known Distinguished Diaspora

The 2 million Indian ethnic community in Malaysia is represented in the ruling National Front (Barisan Nasional) through the Malaysian Indian Congress and the Peoples Progressive Party. The Malaysian Indian Congress is represented by one Cabinet Minister and three Deputy Ministers, and the People's Progressive Party is represented by one Deputy Minister in the Malaysian Cabinet. The Indian Progressive Front supports the National Front from outside.

6 Concerns and Problems of Indian Diaspora

Recent harassment cases of Indian IT workers

7 Diaspora Publications:

There are two tamil dailies, namely- Tamil Nesan and Malaysia Nanban and very few other media. Some of them are as follows:

- (i) Tamil Nesan (Tamil Daily), Chief Editor: Mr. Malayandy, Tel: 03-92216411; Fax: 03-92210448; E-mail: mytamilnesan.yahoo.com ;
- (ii) Malaysian Nanban (Tamil Daily), News Editor: Mr. M. Rajan, Tel: 03-62515981, Fax: 03-62515986, E-mail-news@malaysiananban.com

- (iii) The New Wave (English Magazine), Chief Editor: Mr. K. Siladass, Fax: 03-77819007, E-mail-thenewwavemagazine@yahoo.com
- (iv) ASTRO Vaanavil (24 Hour Indian TV Channel): Chief Executive : Dr. N.C. Rajamani, Tel: 03-95436688; Fax: 03-95430146, Website: www.astro.com.my .

8 Diaspora Relations

Indians do not evoke the jealousy and hatred of the indigenous communities so generally respected but temporary migration has led to some unrest in the country.

9 Local Laws affecting Indian Diaspora

Malaysian Immigration Policy

Malaysian Government has a immigration policy which welcome foreign nationals (except Israel, Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro) to stay in Malaysia on a long term Social Visit Pass under the "MALAYSIA - MY SECOND HOME PROGRAMME" and duration of stay is for a period of five(5) years with a Multiple Entry Visa.

10 Bilateral Relationship of India and Malaysia

Agreements Signed:

1. Cultural Agreement on 30th March, 1978.
2. Cooperation in Science and Technology on 12th September, 1998.
3. Trade Agreement in October 2000.
4. Exemption of the Visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports on 14th May, 2001.
5. *Avoidance of Double Taxation and the prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income on 14th May, 2001.*

Memoranda of Understanding Signed:

1. Defence Cooperation in 1993.
2. Air Service Operation on 12 Sept, 2000.
3. Mutual Cooperation relating to Investment, Construction, Privatisation and Management of Seaports in India on 14th May, 2001.
4. Cooperation on Information Technology and Services on 14th May, 2001.
5. Cooperation in the field of Civil Service, Personnel Management and Public Administration on 14th May, 2001.
6. Double Tracking and Electrification of Ipoh-Padang Besar Section KTM Line between M/o Transport, GoM and IRCON on 14th May, 2001.
7. Between Securities Commission of Malaysia and the Securities and Exchange Board of India in relation to Assistance and Mutual Cooperation on 14th May, 2001.
8. Formation of a Joint Venture company between Antrix Corporation (ISRO) and MEASAT Satellite Systems Sdn Bhd.
9. Technical Services Agreement concerning Hyderabad International Airport between Hyderabad International Airport Ltd and Malaysia Airport Holdings Bhd.

11 Diaspora Associations:

There are not many associations but they can be formed on the basis of religious, regional, occupational.

1. Malaysian Association of Indian University Graduates (MAIUG)
2. Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO)
3. Society of Medical Graduates of Indian and Malaysia (SOMGRIM)
4. Bharat Club
5. Indian Expatriates Tooling Family of Malaysia

There are various cultural promotional associations like Laxmi Narain Temple which teaches Hindi and other promotes Indian classical music and dances.