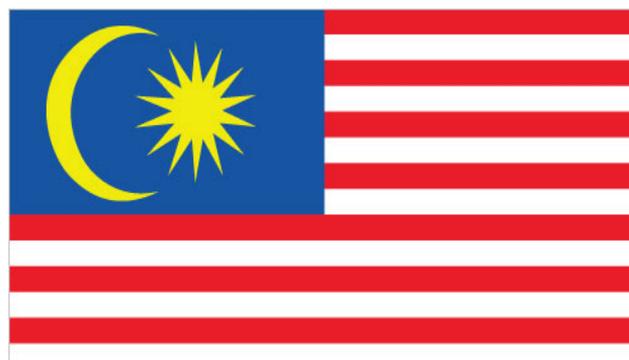




**CURTIN UNIVERSITY
ETHICS EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

CULTURAL AWARENESS

MALAYSIA



CURTIN CULTURAL AWARENESS

The cultural awareness notes in this pamphlet are meant to inform staff and students about some of the customs, traditions and etiquette in a country where Curtin University operates. Cultural awareness is about being mindful that similarities and differences exist between people; that people from different cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds may have different worldviews and sometimes dissimilar perspectives on life matters. It is also about being conscious to not assign positive or negative (better or worse) values to what may be different to one's own culture.

The notes in this pamphlet also include general information about some of the laws and regulations that govern particular behaviours in the host country. Some social norms in a host country may be significantly different from the Australian context and we need to be aware that breaking rules around these may be punishable offences. We also need to be aware that some behaviours that are considered anti-social and distasteful, but not criminal in Australia, could violate laws in other countries and be subject to severe penalties.

Curtin University acknowledges the sovereignty of nations and respects the rules and laws in the countries where we operate or have alliances. While we are confident that staff and students will live Curtin values and practise Curtin's signature behaviours, as representatives of the University, we also expect that staff and students will respect the customs and traditions of these countries and not violate their laws and regulations if residing in or visiting the countries.

It should be noted that the profile in these notes is of the dominant culture and not demonstrative of sub-cultures or individual characteristics. As features of societies change and evolve, some cultural normatives are maintained while others alter significantly. These notes should therefore be taken as a general awareness. Also, as this pamphlet provides a general overview of the customs, traditions and legislation, it is advisable to keep informed about any recent changes especially with regard to legislative reforms in the host country.

CURTIN SARAWAK

Curtin University's Malaysian campus (Curtin Sarawak) located in Miri, Sarawak, is the first and largest offshore international Curtin campus. It commenced operations in 1999 and moved to a new, larger location in 2002. Curtin Sarawak offers a wide variety of high-quality courses, including foundation or pre-university studies, undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The internationally recognized degree qualifications awarded by Curtin Sarawak are the same as those awarded at Curtin University in Australia. The campus is in a unique and scenic tropical location, surrounded by a variety of local trees and shrubs combined with man-made lakes and canals. This backdrop reflects the year-round tropical greenery and abundant wildlife of Sarawak's natural environment.

Located in the northwest of Borneo, the Malaysian state of Sarawak is bordered by the state of Sabah in the northeast, Kalimantan in Indonesia in the south, and the country of Brunei in the north. The capital city of Sarawak is Kuching. The state has an equatorial climate with tropical rainforests and diverse animal and plant species. Miri, a prosperous and cosmopolitan centre, is the second largest city of Sarawak and a tourist gateway featuring the Miri-Sibuti Coral Reef National Park and the UNESCO Heritage site at the Gunung Mulu National Park. Besides exporting oil and gas, timber and oil palms, Sarawak also has strong manufacturing, energy and tourism sectors. The state is ethnically, culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse. Also known as the *Yang di-Pertua Negeri*, a governor is the head of state of Sarawak. Since 2014, this position has been held by Tun Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib bin Mahmud. A chief minister is the head of the government. The current chief minister is Abang Abdul Rahman Zohari Abang Openg.

CURTIN SARAWK CAMPUS



MALAYSIA

INTRODUCTION

Located in the south east of Asia, Malaysia consists of two geographical parts. Peninsular Malaysia is situated between Thailand in the north and Singapore in the south. East Malaysia which is located on the island of Borneo comprises the two states of Sabah and Sarawak and the federal territory of Labuan. The country covers thirteen states (Kedah, Kelantan, Johor, Perlis, Penang, Selangor, Perak, Terengganu, Melaka, Pahang, Sabah, Sarawak and Negeri Sembilan) and three federal territories (Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan).

Influences of Hinduism and Buddhism from India and China dominated the early history of Malaysia. Christianity in the region can be traced back to the 7th century; however, Catholicism and Protestantism were introduced through European colonisation. The Portuguese were the region's first European colonisers in the 16th century, followed by the Dutch in the 17th century and then the British in the 18th century. Muslim influence in the region firmly established itself in the 14th century giving rise to a number of sultanates. Islam has since had a profound influence on the people of this area and their culture. In the mid 20th century, various parts of what is now Malaysia united as the Federation of Malaya and established the symbolic positions of the rulers of the Malaysian states. The Federation of Malaya became an independent country in 1957 and renamed Malaysia in 1963, when it included Sarawak, Sabah, and the other Malay states together with Singapore. Singapore later left to become a sovereign city state in 1965.

Early Chinese and Indian workers migrated to the region to meet the needs of the colonial economy created by the British. Indentured labour from India met the needs of the coffee and sugar plantations and workers were recruited from China to work on tin production. In the early 20th century, rubber became the main agricultural commodity. Consequently, labour migration grew to be the main element of Malaysia's early economic growth and many Indians and Chinese remained and settled in the country permanently after their labour tenures were over.

At independence, the Malaysian economy relied on tin, rubber and palm oil for its export earnings. Strong economic growth since the 1970s has radically transformed the economy with new and contemporary industries established over time. Inflows of foreign direct investment have stimulated the development of Malaysia's manufacturing sector and the country is now one of the world's largest exporters of electronics and electrical products.

Socio-demographics	
Population	Malaysia has a population of approximately 31.7 million (est. 2016).
Ethnic groups	Malay 50.1%, Chinese 22.6%, Indigenous 11.8%, Indian 6.7%, other 0.7%, non-citizens 8.2% (est. 2010).
Language	The official language is <i>Bahasa Melayu</i> . However, English is also widely spoken. Chinese dialects (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hainan) are common, as are Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Punjabi, Thai and a range of Indigenous languages (est. 2010).
Religion	Muslim (official) 61.3%, Buddhist 19.8%, Christian 9.2%, Hindu 6.3%, Confucianism, Taoism, other traditional Chinese religions 1.3%, other 0.4%, none 0.8%, unspecified 1% (est.2010).
Time	Same as Australian WST.
Currency	Ringgit. Au \$1 = 3.11 Ringgit (est. May 2017).
Capital city	Kuala Lumpur.

THE POLITICAL AND LEGAL SYSTEMS

Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy with a federal, constitutional monarchy. The Supreme Sovereign or Paramount Ruler, normally referred to as the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, is the head of state who has other symbolic state roles. Nine of Malaysia's thirteen states (Kedah, Kelantan, Johor, Perlis, Pahang, Selangor, Perak, Terengganu and Negeri Sembilan) have hereditary rulers referred to as sultans (or rajah in the case of Perlis). Four states (Penang, Malacca, Sabah and Sarawak) have governors appointed by the federal government. State leaders have limited powers under the federal constitution and their roles are largely ceremonial. The highest institution in Malaysia is the Conference of Rulers (*Majlis Raja-Raja*), which comprises the hereditary rulers of the nine states and the four state governors. The responsibilities of this institution include the election of the Supreme Sovereign and his deputy every five years or when the positions fall vacant.

The *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (Supreme Sovereign) is selected on a rotating basis for a five-year term from among the nine hereditary rulers. The position of the Supreme Sovereign is primarily ceremonial, but has discretionary powers in the appointment of the Prime Minister (the head of the government) and also has the authority to dissolve the parliament. King Muhammad V, the Sultan of Kelantan, the current *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* was inaugurated on 13 December 2016.

A coalition of political parties, collectively called the Barisan Nasional, has governed Malaysia since 1955. Barisan Nasional (and its predecessor the Alliance Party) comprises the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA),

Gerakan, and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), as well as a number of other political parties. It is the longest ruling coalition in the democratic world. Dato Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak is the sixth and current Prime Minister of Malaysia. He is the President of the United Malays National Organisation, the leading party in Malaysia's ruling Barisan Nasional coalition. He succeeded Tun Dato Sri Haji Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi and took office in April 2009. Dato Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has been the Deputy Prime Minister since July 2015.

A general election is held once every five years; however, the Prime Minister can ask the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (Supreme Sovereign) to dissolve the parliament at any time before the five-year period expires. Elections are held at both the federal and state levels. Federal level elections are for the *Dewan Rakyat*, (the House of Representatives - the lower house of the Parliament) and the state level elections are for the various *Dewan Undangan Negeri* (State Legislative Assemblies). At the federal level, voters elect the 222-members of the House of Representatives. The party that has the majority in the House of Representatives forms the federal government.

The Malaysian legal structure is based on the common law system, a legacy of the colonisation by the British in the early 19th century up to the late 1950s. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia sets out the legal framework and federal laws enacted by the parliament are applied throughout the country. However, there are laws enacted by state legislative assemblies that apply to particular states. The constitution provides for a unique dual justice system—the secular laws (criminal and civil) and Islamic *shariah* laws. In Malaysia, *shariah* is spelt *syariah* as per its spelling in the Malay language (*Bahasa Melayu*). *Syariah* law mostly applies to Muslim Malaysians and the *syariah* courts only have jurisdiction in matters of personal law, for example marriage, custody, divorce and inheritance. In some states, for instance Kelantan, there has been a push to enforce *syariah* criminal (*hudud*) laws. Amendments have been tabled in the Malaysian parliament this year (2017) to expand the severity of punishment handed by the *syariah* courts and impose penalties for actions such as illicit sex and consumption of alcohol. Even though Malaysia is a relatively liberal country, some of its laws and penalties are much stricter than Australia.

SOCIETY, CULTURE AND ETIQUETTE

The collective culture of Malaysia draws from the influences of not only the three main ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese and Indians), but also from its experiences as a British colony, contact with the Portuguese and the Dutch, as well as early Arabs and Persians through the spread of Islam in the region.

Constitutionally, Islam is the country's official religion; however, there is freedom to practise other religions. Most Muslims in Malaysia follow the *Shafi'e* school of the Sunni sect of Islam¹. While the ethnic Malays who are mostly Muslims, are the dominant group, other ethnicities retain their religions, customs and way of life. Endogamy (marriage within own

¹ There are four main schools of thought (*madhahib*) in the Sunni sect followed in different geographic regions of the world.

groups) is a common practice. Most Malaysians are multilingual, with English, Mandarin, Cantonese or Tamil likely to be their second language. The national official language is *Bahasa Melayu*, but English is widely used in the service industries, within the education system and in media communication.

In general, most Malaysians are aware of western ways and greetings such as handshakes are common. However, females may not offer hands to men and it is prudent to wait to be offered a hand in greeting. If a hand is not presented in greeting, a nod or a smile is sufficient acknowledgement. Men may also not shake hands with women and may bow while placing their hand on their heart instead, as a salutation. It is respectful to give a slight deferential bow when one encounters elderly people. If invited into homes, shoes should be removed before entering, unless the host advises otherwise. Gifts to host families should be appropriate as per their religious and ethnic backgrounds. A gift is traditionally refused before it is accepted to demonstrate that the recipient is not materialistic.

Malaysian cuisine is an amalgamation of the various distinct flavours of the different ethnic groups, and foods often reflect religious cultural orientations. Rice is a staple and the basis for many dishes. Tropical fruits and seafood are in abundant supply and feature heavily in the Malaysian diet. Breakfast is considered an important meal of the day and visitors can expect to be served a full hot meal consisting of curries, meat, vegetables and rice. While most urban Malaysian homes have dining table sets, traditional Malaysian households may prefer being seated on the floor while having meals. As a show of gratitude for sustenance, it is polite to finish off servings of food on one's plate completely.

Like other Muslims, Malaysian Muslims eat *halal* food and refrain from consuming alcohol and pork. At mealtimes using the right hand, both for serving and for eating, is recommended. The use of the left hand is frowned upon as it is used for washroom purposes and therefore avoided at the dining table. In terms of precedence, elders are served first and it is polite to wait for them to be served before reaching for food at a table. If invited into a Muslim Malaysian household, it is not suitable to gift alcohol to the family or toys to children that are dogs or pigs. While most Muslims consider the saliva of a dog to be impure and do not have dogs in their houses (many prefer to keep dogs outside the house), Muslims in general agree that all parts of a pig are *haram* (forbidden to Muslims) and therefore would consider it inappropriate to have even as a toy. Foodstuff offered as presents should be '*halal*' (meaning permissible for Muslims) and it is courteous to present gifts with the right hand or both hands if the item is large.

Chinese Malaysian eating etiquette is different from the other ethnic groups. Food is served in bowls rather than plates, and placed in the centre of the table. The food is eaten with chopsticks and not by hand, but spoons are provided for soups and broths. It is impolite to leave chopsticks sticking upright out of dishes as this symbolises a prayer for the deceased. If eating with chopsticks is inconvenient, it is polite to ask for western style cutlery for eating purposes. Senior members of a group are expected to start eating before the rest. Pork is an integral part of the Chinese Malaysian diet, especially during celebrations. Most Chinese eateries in the country serve pork.

Indian Malaysian cuisine consists of adaptations of Indian dishes mostly from the southern parts of India where the Indian Malaysians originate from. Hindu Indian Malaysians may serve only vegetarian food or may not include beef in their dishes as the cow is a sacred animal in the Hindu religion. Indian Malaysians traditionally do not use cutlery for eating, and also eat with the right hand. A flat-bread (*roti*) is served with which to scoop a traditional curry. Muslim Indian or *Mamak* dishes are very popular and have a distinctly Malaysian style available at roadside stalls and restaurants. For gift-giving especially to Hindu Indian Malaysians, it is not appropriate to give leather products and giving alcohol may not be suitable unless one is certain that the recipient drinks.

DRESS AND DRESS-CODES

Dress-codes in Malaysia are relatively conformist and conservative by western standards. While the degree of covering is an individual choice, exposure of too much flesh is not culturally appropriate. The traditional national outfit for women, the *baju kurung* (loosely translated as the 'enclosed dress') is a long-sleeved blouse up to the knees worn over a long skirt that reaches the ankles. The outfit is often completed by a headscarf. Male traditional attire, a loose tunic worn over long trousers with a piece (*sarong*) wrapped around the hips is called *baju melayu* and often accompanied by the *songkok* (a truncated cone cap). Other ethnic groups can be seen wearing clothing customary to their backgrounds. Chinese Malaysian women often wear the *cheongsam*, a one-piece dress with a high collar and Indian Malaysians may wear the *saree* or the *shalwar-kameez* depending on the regions of India they originate from. The *saree* is a female garment from the Indian sub-continent. Ranging from four to eight meters, it is a long wrap worn around the waist with one end draped over the shoulder. The *saree* is worn with a short blouse and over a slip leaving the midriff exposed. The *shalwar kameez* is also attire that originates from the Indian sub-continent. The *shalwar kameez* can be worn by both men and women, but with variations according to gender. The *kameez*, a long shirt and the *shalwar*, baggy trousers are combined to form the *shalwar kameez*.

Dress-codes are more relaxed in the cities than in regional areas. Business dress in Malaysia can be quite casual. Trousers, a shirt with either long or short sleeves are fairly standard office attire for males. For females, it is more appropriate to cover the upper arms and have skirts falling below the knees. Malaysian businesswomen tend to dress in light and bright colours. Dresses and skirts are worn more frequently than trousers, which may be inappropriate in some offices. Visitors are advised to dress more conservatively when uncertain about dress-codes.

PUBLIC SOCIAL AND BUSINESS CONTEXTS

A unique feature of Malaysian social culture is honorific titles which range from royal designations to those conferred on individuals by the federal and state leaders. Titles can be conferred by the Supreme Sovereign, the sultans or the governors of the different states

and have a ranking system. Although sounding similar, titles are spelt differently depending on who bestows them. Federal titles include *Tun* (inherited title used by male descendants of noble lineage), *Tan Sri* (a senior federal title) and *Datuk* (a federal title conferred since 1965). State titles include *Dato Sri* (highest state non-hereditary title), *Datuk Seri* (most senior state title conferred by a governor) and *Dato* (a title that can only be conferred by a royal ruler of one of the nine Malaysian states). Both males and females can receive these titles. Spouses of males who receive such honours are addressed using complementary titles such as *Toh Puan and Datin*. The titles elevate individuals' social status and are highly regarded by the Malaysian public. The titles are the equivalent to the British 'sir' and should always be used in written or verbal addresses. When addressing people with such titles, it is considered rude to omit the title including when addressing the spouses of the individuals.

Considering the country's varied ethnic backgrounds and naming patterns, identifying the correct way to address Malaysian counterparts can be difficult. If in doubt, it is perfectly acceptable to ask how a person would like to be addressed and to clarify that the pronunciation of names is correct. In a business context, acquaintances should be addressed with either their professional title or a generic title (Professor/ Doctor/ Mr/ Mrs/ Miss), followed by the person's name. Malay Malaysians who are mostly Muslim generally adhere to Arabic naming patterns. As such, males will be identified by a given name, followed by 'bin' (meaning, 'son of') followed by the father's name. Females are identified by their given name, followed by 'binti' (meaning, 'daughter of') followed by the father's name. The names of Chinese Malaysians are applied in a different order to Western names; with the family name coming before the given name. Most Indian Malaysians do not use family surnames; instead they use the father's name as the second name. In keeping with the Sikh culture, *Singh* (meaning lion in Sanskrit) and *Kaur* (meaning prince in Sanskrit; however it is used for females) are middle names adopted by male and female Sikhs respectively. The titles *Haji* (for males) and *Hajjah* (for females) are used for Muslim men and women who have been for the pilgrimage, or *hajj* which is one of the key pillars of the religion of Islam.

Standard business hours in Malaysia are Monday to Friday, 8.00 am to 5.00 pm with a lunch break in between. On Fridays, the lunch break is usually longer to allow Muslims to attend the congregational (*jummah*) prayers. In the states of Johor, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu, the working days are from Sunday to Thursday; Friday and Saturday are the weekend. It is advisable to avoid making appointments during the Muslim prayer times anywhere in Malaysia.

Like in many other Asian cultures, 'saving face' is a key facet of relationships and respect in Malaysian culture. One's reputation and standing in society are often subject to a person's ability to control emotions and appear friendly at all times. Unpleasant topics are not brought forth in public and losing control over negative emotions or showing or causing embarrassment to another is considered disrespectful. Rather than being direct, disagreement can often be implied. Negative responses particularly, are avoided in order to prevent discord and preserve harmony at all times. These are key aspects of Malaysian culture.

In conversations, some subject matters that are considered fairly personal in Western society are entirely acceptable topics of conversation in Malaysia. Consequently, one may be asked questions about one's income, marital status or age. Welcome topics of conversation include family and cultural heritage, business, and travel and leisure activities. It is better to avoid discussing politics, aspects of Malaysian culture that one considers negative, religion, as well as sex or gender issues.

Full modest dressing is required when visiting a mosque (called *masjid* in *Bahasa Melayu*). Women may be asked to wear a cloak and headdress, which most mosques are happy to provide to visitors. Shoes should be removed when entering mosques and proper protocols observed to not offend those who may be praying. The five times congregational prayer in mosques should be respected. Similar respect should be shown at other places of worship such as the Hindu and Sikh temples and the Christian churches that have comparable protocols of reverence. Public displays of affection are not appropriate in such places.

As in other Muslim majority countries, the holy month of Ramadhan is observed by Malaysian Muslims by abstaining from food and water from dawn to dusk. Muslims are not permitted to eat and drink in public and may be subjected to questioning if they do. This does not apply to non-Muslims. Some restaurants and cafes may be closed, at least until the late afternoon when preparations for the evening meal (*iftar*) start. In most parts, there is an atmosphere of festivity and markets stalls are set up to serve Ramadhan specialties after the fast is broken.

DAYS AND TIMES OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Federal holidays are observed in all the states and in addition, each state observes its own respective local holidays, such as the birthday of the state's monarch.

New Year's Day – Except for in Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Terengganu, the 1st of January is a national holiday in Malaysia.

Chinese New Year – the Chinese New Year is celebrated nationally in Malaysia. The Chinese calendar is a lunisolar calendar, therefore the dates change each year.

Thaipusam – a Hindu ceremony that is held each year during the full moon in the tenth month of the Hindu calendar – falling from mid-January to mid-February. It is a public holiday in some parts of Malaysia.

The Installation of Yang di-Pertuan Agong – the Malaysian Government declared April 24, 2017 to be a public holiday to celebrate the ascendancy of Malaysia's 15th Agong, Sultan Muhammad V from Kelantan.

Labour Day – the 1st of May called Labour Day is a national holiday in Malaysia.

Merdeka Day – Celebrated on 31 August, it marks the Federation of Malaya's independence from Britain in 1957.

Vesak or Wesak Day – a day traditionally observed by Buddhists marks the birthday of the Buddha.

Awal Muharram – marks the beginning of the first day of the *Hijri* calendar (the Islamic lunar calendar). *Muharram* is the first month of the *Hijri* calendar. In Malaysia the day is also called *Maal Hijrah*. Additionally, the day is the start of a ten-day commemoration of the martyrdom of Hussein ibn Ali, Prophet Mohammed's grandson, who was killed in the battle of Karbala on the tenth day of Muharram in the year 680 AD.

Nuzul al Quran – Is a national holiday except in Johor, Kedah, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Sabah and Sarawak. Celebrated in the month of Ramadhan, it marks the beginning of the revelation of the Quran (the holy book of Islam) to the Prophet Muhammad.

Hari Raya Aidilfitri - Marks the end of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadhan. The date is determined according to the Islamic calendar.

Hari Raya Haji – Marks the festival of the sacrifice. On this day, Muslims sacrifice animals and distribute meat to the needy to commemorate the Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham) faith in God tested by asking him to sacrifice his son. In Malaysia it is called *Hari Raya Haji*, *Aidiladha* or *Hari Raya Korban*. The date is also determined according to the Islamic calendar.

Agong's Birthday – Usually celebrated on 29 July; in 2017 it was being celebrated on 9 September. The day marks the birthday of the Supreme Sovereign, the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*.

Malaysia Day – Observed on 16 September, the day marks the founding of the Malaysian Federation.

Prophet Mohammed's birthday – Most Muslims mark the birthday of the founder of their religion on the 12th day of the month of *Rabi ul awal* (the third month of the Islamic calendar). The Prophet was born in 570 AD in the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia.

Deepavali - is the Hindu festival of lights that signifies the victory of light over darkness, or good over evil. It is celebrated on the 15th day of *Kartika* (October/November) in the Hindu calendar. Except for in Sarawak, it is a national holiday in Malaysia.

Christmas Day – the 25th of December is a public holiday in Malaysia to celebrate Christmas. There are colourful displays in shopping malls for one or two months before Christmas Day and a public holiday on 25 December.

CONDUCT SUBJECT TO LEGAL PENALTIES

Drugs possession: Malaysia has very strict policies on the trafficking and possession of illegal drugs. Depending on the crime, both capital and corporal punishments can be handed down to offenders. The use or possession of drugs can result in punishments from whipping to imprisonment. It is also illegal to have drugs in one's system and travellers have occasionally been subjected to urine tests on arrival in the country. Medications prescribed by Australian doctors are accepted, however if the medication is unusual or there is a requirement of syringe use, this should be accompanied by a letter from the prescribing doctor.

LGBTIQ+ issues: LGBTIQ+ rights are not recognised in Malaysia. Homosexual acts are illegal and punishments include fines, prison sentences and even corporal punishments. The criminal code provides for additional punishment for men convicted of 'gross indecency with another male person'. Besides the secular law, there are numerous *syariah* based punishments for such activities that Muslim citizens can be charged for within the Islamic courts. The country also retains colonial criminal bans on sodomy² which include both hetero and homo sexual acts. Cross dressing is also illegal in Malaysia. Public displays of affection are often frowned upon for any couple, irrespective of sexual orientation. It is advisable to behave conservatively in the public sphere.

Freedom of Expression: Freedom of expression is curtailed through the Sedition Act and the Communications and Multimedia Act. There are criminal penalties for communication that is 'obscene, indecent, false menacing or offensive in character with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass another person'. This law can be used against those that insult the Malaysian royalty or the Prime Minister on social media or elsewhere.

Religious laws: *Syariah* laws pertaining solely to Muslims relate to offences such as pre-marital sex and drinking alcohol. Non-Muslims who may be found aiding Muslims to break the law can be charged and punished. People preaching against Islam or proselytizing a non-Islamic doctrine may be charged too. Islamic law is particularly enforced in Kelantan and Terengganu states. According to a Human Rights' Report (2016), if deemed necessary, authorities can enter private premises without a warrant to catch Muslims suspected of engaging in offences such as gambling, consumption of alcohol, and sexual relations outside marriage.

Alcohol: Although Malaysia is largely a Muslim country, the sale of alcohol is permitted for non-Muslims and the legal age for alcohol consumption is 18. The legal drinking age is due to be raised to 21 years and above by the end of 2017. There is no legal age for drinking for Muslims as it is against the law for them to consume alcohol and selling alcohol to Muslims is forbidden. Strict alcohol bans are enforced in Kelantan and Terengganu. Driving under the influence of alcohol is illegal and penalties are strictly enforced.

² Although sodomy is a pejorative and an outdated term in the Australian context, senior opposition officials have been convicted of this in Malaysia.

TRAVEL INFORMATION AND VISAS

Up to date information on travel, safety precautions and visa requirements is available on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website Smartraveller:
<http://smartraveller.gov.au/Countries/asia/south-east/Pages/malaysia.aspx>

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Australian High Commission, Malaysia

6 Jalan Yap Kwan Seng
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