

## Country Background Notes

### **MALAYSIA:**



**FLAG OF MALAYSIA:** 14 equal horizontal stripes of red (top) alternating with white (bottom); there is a blue rectangle in the hoist-side corner bearing a yellow crescent and a 14-point yellow star; the crescent and the star traditional symbols of Islam; the design was based on the flag of U.S.

**BACKGROUND:** During the late 18th and 19th centuries, Great Britain established colonies and protectorates in the area of current Malaysia; these were occupied by Japan from 1942 to 1945. In 1948, the British-ruled territories on the Malay Peninsula formed the Federation of Malaya, which became independent in 1957. Malaysia was formed in 1963 when the former British colonies of Singapore and the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak on the northern coast of Borneo joined the Federation. The first several years of the country's history were marred by Indonesian efforts to control Malaysia, Philippine claims to Sabah, and Singapore's secession from the Federation in 1965.

**GEOGRAPHY:** Area: 329,750 sq km

Capital: Kuala Lumpur, note: Putrajaya is referred to as the administrative capital.

Terrain: Coastal plains rising to hills and mountains.

Climate: Tropical; annual southwest (April to October) and northeast (October to February) monsoons.

**PEOPLE:** Nationality: *noun:* Malaysian(s) *adjective:* Malaysian.

Population: 23,522,482 (July 2004 est.)

Religions: Muslim, Buddhist, Daoist, Hindu, Christian, Sikh; note - in addition, Shamanism is practiced in East Malaysia.

Language: Bahasa Melayu (official), English, Chinese dialects (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainan, (Foochow), Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Panjabi, Thai; note - in addition, in East Malaysia several indigenous language sare spoken, the largest are Iban and Kadazan

Literacy: *Total population:* 88.7%.

Health: 18.35 deaths/1,000 live births, life expectancy 71.95 years.

Work force: Agriculture 14.5%, industry 36%, services 49.5% (2000 est.).

Ethnic groups: Malay and other indigenous 58%, Chinese 24%, Indian 8%, others 10% (2000).

**GOVERNMENT:** Type: Constitutional monarchy.

Independence: 31 August 1957 (from UK).

Constitution: 31 August 1957, amended 16 September 1963.

**ECONOMY:** Currency: inggit (MYR).

Percapita income: \$9,000 (2003 est.).

Trade export: Electronic equipment, petroleum and liquefied natural gas, wood and wood products, palm oil, rubber, textiles, chemicals.

**AGRICULTURE:** Peninsular Malaysia - rubber, palm oil, cocoa, rice; Sabah - subsistence crops, rubber, timber, coconuts, rice; Sarawak - rubber, pepper; timber.