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Introduction

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Malaysia consists of two distinct geographical segments separated by the South China Sea, Peninsular (or West) Malaysia in the west and East Malaysia in the east. The long narrow peninsula of West Malaysia extends from latitude 1° 20' north to latitude 6° 40' north, and from longitude 99° 35' to longitude 104° 20' east. It is situated in a central position within Southeast Asia, being an extension of the Asian land mass as well as part of the wider Malay archipelago. Beyond West Malaysia's northern land border lies Thailand, and its immediate neighbour in the south is the small island state of Singapore joined to it by the old rail-and-road causeway and the new second-link bridge, both cutting through the narrow Straits of Johore. In the west just across the busy Straits of Malacca is the large elongated island of Sumatra, part of the multi-island Republic of Indonesia.

East Malaysia occupies the north and south-west portion of the huge island of Borneo. It extends from latitude 0° 85' north to latitude 7° 35' north, and from longitude 109° 60' to longitude 119° 35' east. To the south, it shares a common land border with Kalimantan which is an Indonesian territory, and in the north across the Sulu Sea is the Republic of the Philippines. Because of its proximity, the people have considerable contacts with these two neighbours, perhaps more so than with West Malaysia. Though East Malaysia has a land area of 198,160 square kilometres that is larger than the 132,090 in West Malaysia, it is not that important viewed from many aspects. For one thing, it contains only two states, Sabah and Sarawak as compared to the eleven states and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, the hub of the Federal Government, in West Malaysia.

West Malaysia extends some 740 kilometres in length from Perlis state in the north to Johore Bahru town in the south, and about 322 kilometres in width at its widest point. The total land area approximates 132,090 square kilometres, slightly larger than England without Wales. It has a coastline of nearly 1,931 kilometres, covered in many places with mangrove swamps, sand bars and sandy beaches. The western side has a few natural harbours but the eastern coastline is rather shallow, sandy and without good harbours. The country comprises a series of mountain ranges running from the north-west in the Thai border to southwest into the state of Negri Sembilan. To the west of this central range is the Bintang Range extending from the northern border to the Taiping region, while to the east is an area of highland in Kelantan and Trengganu. These main mountain masses determine the drainage system which is well served by a multiplicity of rivers, somewhat shorter and more numerous in the west. The rivers are narrow and swift in their upper reaches but become sluggish and meandering once they enter the coastal plains. They have been the chief means of communication and important factors in the growth of settlements and towns.

Much of East Malaysia is mountainous. In Sabah, the Crocker Range, with the 4,100-metre high Mount Kinabalu in the northern end, runs parallel to the west coast. There are other smaller mountain complexes in various localities in the east. In Sarawak, the highest point is less than 2,500 metres, but there are large areas with mountainous terrain. The longest river in Sabah, Kinabatangan River, flows from the centre to the east, while the Rajang River in Sarawak travels from east to west. In both states, the vast network of rivers constitutes a prominent feature of the landscape and serves as an important means of transport. Both states have considerable patches of mangrove swamps along the long coastline, some 1,450 kilometres in Sabah and 810 kilometres in Sarawak.

Malaysia, being near the tropics, has most of its land mass covered with dense tropical forests and exposed to an equatorial climate with uniform and high temperatures, abundant rainfall and high humidity. Temperatures are constantly high throughout the year, with only slight changes in the average monthly temperatures. Somewhat greater variations are shown by the daily temperatures which may fluctuate between 22 to 32 degrees inland. The rainy seasons are very much influenced by the

southwest and the northeast monsoons. During the northeast monsoon in October to March, the east coast of West Malaysia and the west coast of East Malaysia are exposed to heavy rain. The southwest monsoon in April to September brings heavy rain to particularly the western coastal belt of West Malaysia. Fairly frequent conventional rain occurs during the two inter-monsoon periods, thunderstorms are not infrequent all the year round.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before the coming of the Europeans in the early sixteenth century, the territory now known as West Malaysia, was under the rule of various Malay sultanates established at different periods in the west coast, especially around Malacca.¹ Prior to this the country was under the sway of the Majapahit Empire centred in Java, which had earlier replaced the Sri Vijaya Empire in fourteenth century. The first European incursion into the country occurred in 1511 when the Portuguese captured Malacca and held sway until it was in turn captured by the Dutch in 1641. The Dutch ruled Malacca until the late eighteenth century when the British took over. In 1786, Francis Light occupied the island of Penang on behalf of the East India Company, and the island together with the hinterland of Province Wellesley were ceded to the company. A decade later in 1795, Malacca was surrendered by the Dutch to the British and, though returned on two occasions, was eventually given to the British in 1825 in exchange for Bencoolen. Further south the settlement of Singapore was established by Stamford Raffles for the East India Company in 1819.

In 1826, the three British possession of Penang, Malacca and Singapore were combined into one administrative unit known as the Straits Settlements, which was subsequently transferred from the control of the East India Company to the Colonial Office in 1867. British influence did not stop here. The increasing interest of the British in the affairs of the hinterland Malay States resulted in the four central states of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang accepting British control and coming together to form the Federated Malay States in 1895. This larger political unit had a centralized form of government, with a British Resident in each state. In theory the British Residents were supposed to advise the Rulers, but in practice their advice

must be accepted if it had nothing to do with Malay customs and religion. The other five states, Perils, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu and Johore, remained outside the two larger political groupings, and were frequently referred to, rather accusingly, as the Unfederated Malay States. They were each administered with the aid of a British Adviser as a separate political entity. This broad political framework continued to exist right up to the outbreak of war in December 1941, culminating in the Japanese Occupation of the country from February 1942 to September 1945.

The early postwar period saw some swift and profound political changes. The first government to take control of the country after the war was the British Military Administration whose prime task was to restore law and order. This temporary military administration was replaced by the creation of the Malayan Union on 1 April 1946, incorporating all the states, except Singapore, under a Governor and a strong central government. Since the new constitution deprived the Rulers of all their important powers, it evoked the resentment of the people, especially the Malays. The Malayan Union was thus abandoned in favour of the Federation of Malaya on 1 February 1948. Under this new constitutional framework the Malay Rulers remained sovereign in the nine Malay states, while Penang and Malacca were administered as British territories. Singapore was excluded from the Federation and was governed as a separate British colony. A significant feature of the new agreement is that, with the consensus of the British Crown and the Malay Rulers, provisions for progress towards eventual self-government were included.

On 1 August 1957, the Federation of Malaya became a free and independent country under a Yang Di-Pertuan Agong elected every five years from among the nine Rulers. Each state has an elected state legislature, while the federal legislature consists of a senate and a house of representatives which had fully elected members. In the election held after independence the Alliance, which comprised the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), was voted into power. The Alliance, under the premiership of Tengku Abdul Rahman, formed the first independent government. The Alliance, subsequently enlarged to include other political parties and renamed the National Front, has been ruling the country ever since.

The two eastern states of Sabah and Sarawak have a completely different historical background. Until the late nineteenth century, North Borneo (now Sabah) was part of the Sultanate of Brunei, but from 1881 it came under the management of the British North Borneo (Chartered) Company.² Like the countries in the region, North Borneo was under the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945, and thereafter it eventually became a Crown Colony under the British on 15 July 1946. Sarawak was also part of the Brunei Sultanate in the early years. On 24 September 1841, the Sultan declared James Brooke as the Rajah and Governor of Sarawak. Rajah Brooke and his descendants continue to rule Sarawak, and after the Japanese Occupation Sir Wymer Brooke ceded Sarawak to Britain on 1 July 1946.³

The Federation of Malaya was expanded on 16 September 1963 with the formation of Malaysia notwithstanding the opposition from Indonesia and the Philippines. The larger political unit of Malaysia includes the eleven states in the former Federation of Malaya as well as the internally self-governing colony of Singapore and the two colonies of Sarawak and North Borneo (now Sabah). By participating in this new political development, the three colonies achieved their independence within Malaysia. The larger political partnership did not function smoothly, and, because of irreconcilable differences, the membership of Singapore in Malaysia came to an abrupt end on 9 August 1965 when it was forced to secede and thus became an independent country by itself. Since then Malaysia comprises the eleven states in West Malaysia and the two states of Sarawak and Sabah in the island of Borneo. Four states (Penang, Malacca, Sarawak and Sabah) have an appointed Governor and a Chief Minister heading the elected state legislative council, while the other nine states have a hereditary Sultan and a *Mentri Besar* as head of the elected state legislature.

ECONOMY

Compared to the pre-independence period in the mid-1950s, the economy of Malaysia is now quite advanced and broadly based, with manufacturing accounting for about 24 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and mining and quarrying some 10.4 per cent.⁴ Wholesale and retail trade, and hotels and restaurants contributed 16 per cent to

GDP and finance, insurance, real estate and business about 12 per cent. The contribution of the agricultural sector has been reduced to only 12 per cent. The prospect for further growth lies in the services sector such as finance, tourism and education.

During the colonial period, the economy was too dependent on rubber production and tin mining, which were subjected to frequent wide fluctuation in commodity prices and export earnings. Oil palm was one of the cash crops introduced as part of the agricultural diversification programme aimed at injecting greater stability in the economy. The cultivation of oil palm has proved to be quite successful, with the land area devoted to this crop standing at 4.05 hectares or two-thirds of the total cultivated area in the country.⁵ About 60 per cent of the oil palm land are located in estates and the other 40 per cent in smallholdings. The cultivation of oil palm has grown to such an extent that Malaysia has become one of the major exporters of palm oil.

The expansion of oil palm was accompanied by a decline in rubber cultivation, falling to 1.24 million hectares or one-fifth of the total cultivated area. Only some 5 per cent of the land planted with rubber trees belong to estates and the other large 95 per cent to smallholdings.⁶ The decline in rubber land in estates may be attributed to the fragmentation of some estates and the substitution of rubber with oil palm. The acreage devoted to rubber in smallholdings has also declined as the small farmers started to switch to oil palm with government assistance. However, Malaysia is still one of the largest rubber producers in the world.

Paddy cultivation on 0.68 million hectares, the traditional occupation of the rural folks, now occupies third position viewed in terms of cultivated area.⁷ Paddy is grown entirely in small farms, located chiefly in the fertile low-lying plains of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu. Strenuous efforts are being made by the government to increase the output of rice so as to raise the living standard of the predominantly Bumiputera paddy farmers. Some of the more notable measures are huge irrigation works, subsidized fertilizers, improved seedlings and better credit facilities. Such measures, coupled with double-cropping where possible and new paddy land converted from virgin jungle and swampland, have resulted in a marked rise in paddy production. Rice does not fetch any significant export earnings since

almost all of the annual harvest is consumed within the country. What is significant is that the aim of self-sufficiency in rice has been almost achieved, with corresponding improvement in the living standard of the paddy farmers.

Coconut is one of the crops cultivated to meet local needs as well as foreign demand. Some 0.13 million hectares or 2.1 per cent of the total cultivated area are devoted to coconut cultivation, and almost all are situated in smallholdings.⁸ A less important cash crop introduced to diversify the agricultural sector is cocoa, which is cultivated in some 33,000 hectares of land. The other crops with smaller acreage are pineapple, pepper, tobacco, tea, fruits and vegetables, usually grown by small farmers.

Another component of the economic strategy designed to broaden and strengthen the economy was the launching of an industrialization programme to reduce the dependency on a few export earners and, more importantly, to provide jobs to the rapidly expanding labour force.⁹ Among the more important measures taken by the government to promote industrialization were the establishment of industrial estates with all the essential manufacturing facilities, the introduction of various forms of tax incentives, and the issue of liberal work permits to skilled foreigners required to manage the factories. The manufacturing activity is now quite broadly based, producing a wide range of light to heavy products. The importance of manufacturing is underlined by the 24 per cent it contributes to the gross domestic product.

For quite a long time, the mining industry was dominated by tin mining, with the mines operated and owned by Chinese entrepreneurs at the beginning and subsequently by British-owned companies utilizing capital-intensive dredges to mine the tin.¹⁰ The tin mines are located mainly along the western coastal belt of West Malaysia, especially in the Kinta valley in Perak and Klang valley in Selangor. As the other sectors of the economy expanded, the share of tin products in the total export earnings has been reduced. Besides, oil and gas explorations in the offshore regions along the coastline began to be intensified, and oil discoveries and natural gas strikes were made. The petroleum industry under the management of the state-owned National Petroleum Board (Petronas) has overtaken tin mining and became a key player in the national economy of the country.

The development of the Malaysian economy was further transformed in recent years by the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1970. The new strategy, an outcome of the May 1999 race riots, was designed to eradicate poverty by raising the income level and increasing employment opportunities for all citizens, and thus correct economic imbalance so as to eliminate the identification of race with economic activity. The country has been experiencing an annual growth rate of some 5 to 9 per cent in recent years, attaining a per capita income of about US\$10,548 in 2013. This compares favourably with the corresponding figure of US\$5,674 for Thailand, US\$3,510 for Indonesia, and US\$2,790 for the Philippines, but less so with Singapore which has a per capita income of US\$54,776.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The taking of a census in Malaysia has its origins in the beginning of the nineteenth century when the inhabitants of the newly established Straits Settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore were first separately counted in 1801, 1928 and 1824 respectively. Thereafter, counts were made almost every year and later at longer intervals, and by 1836 eight were held in Penang, seven in Malacca and eleven in Singapore. The crude statistics of these counts were collected and published by T.J. Newbold.¹¹ After 1836 it appears that three further counts were conducted in the Straits Settlements in 1840, 1849 and 1960, and the results classified by sex and race were reproduced by T. Braddell in his book.¹² The statistics produced from these counts completed prior to 1871 were not only extremely narrow in scope but also seriously in error in many respects. Very limited demographic value can be placed on these early population statistics though they are of some historical interest.

The first proper census as understood in the modern form was conducted in the Straits Settlements in 1871 as part of the overall colonial census programme implemented throughout the British Empire.¹³ In each of these settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore a committee of government officials was in charge of the census and each committee produced a report consisting of a brief administrative account and about twenty pages of basic tables. Another census in the same format was held in 1881 in the Straits Settlements.

The year 1891 saw the Federated Malay States inaugurating the first proper census and the Straits Settlements conducting the third one under, not committees, but a single superintendent of census. A decade later similar censuses were held in the Straits Settlements and in the Federated Malay States.

The year 1911 was of special significance in that it witnessed not only the continuation of the decennial censuses in these two regions, but also the launching of census taking in the Unfederated Malay States. Population statistics for the whole territory now known as West Malaysia were thus made available for the first time in 1911. This delay in the availability of population statistics for the whole of the peninsula may be attributed to the varying degrees of British influence and hence the different systems of government among the various parts of the country.

In 1921, a population census for the combined territory of West Malaysia and Singapore was undertaken by a single superintendent who was also responsible for bringing out the census report. The next decennial census was conducted on the same scale in 1931. A census was planned for April 1941 but the increasing difficulties arising from the imminence of war led to the abandonment of the project and to a break in the long series of decennial censuses. After the war plans were immediately drawn up to enumerate the population and a common census for the whole of West Malaysia and Singapore was finally completed in 1947. The next postwar census taken in 1957 was a departure from the three previous ones in that West Malaysia, being a distinct political unit at that time, was separately enumerated under one single superintendent.

With the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the next census was held in 1970 on a pan-Malaysia basis, covering the eleven states in West Malaysia and the two states in East Malaysia.¹⁴ A census of housing was incorporated in the population census, and hence the expanded census conducted in 1970 was known as a Population and Housing Census. The scope of the census in regard to population was quite comprehensive, with the usual topics in the previous censuses supplemented by new topics deemed useful for natural socio-economic planning.

The second pan-Malaysia census of Population was held ten years later in 1980 with 10 June 1980 as the census date. In the main, the

method of conducting this census was essentially similar to that used in the previous census.¹⁵ As for the topics included, Table 1.1 shows that one old topic on number of years married was dropped, and three new topics were introduced. They are age at first marriage, place of previous residence, and reason for migration. Another change was the presentation of the census data for an additional geographic unit carved out of Selangor to form the federal territory of Kuala Lumpur in 1974. The census results were published in the form of two general reports covering the whole of Malaysia and thirteen separate reports for the thirteen states.

The third Population Census of Malaysia was held in 1991 instead of 1990, thus breaking the usual ten-year interval for conducting a census as recommended by the United Nations.¹⁶ The census was held much later in the year, viz. 14 August, instead of near the middle of the year. Another departure from previous censuses was the drastic change in the scope of the census. Whilst only two new topics were introduced, no less than fifteen previous topics were omitted as can be observed in Table 1.1. The topics included in the 2010 Census have not been included in the table since they have yet to be stated in the census reports issued so far. The sharp reduction in the number of topics has obviously made it impossible to analyse the affected data on a continuous time series basis. The census results were published in the same manner as before, two general reports and thirteen state reports. However, separate figures are made available for the new federal territory of Labuan, converted in 1984 from the district of Labuan in the state of Sabah, and of course for the earlier federal territory of Kuala Lumpur.

The next Census of Population was held nine years later in 2000 with 5 July as the census date.¹⁷ In contrast to the large reduction in the number of topics in the last census, the 2000 Census reinstated eight topics previously dropped, and only one old topic on place where a person was found on census days was omitted. More information is therefore available from the census, though time-series for the reinstated topics have been broken. Indeed, the frequent changes in the number of topics in the four pan-Malaysia censuses make it rather problematic to examine certain characteristics of the population for the whole forty-year period. A radical departure from the three previous censuses was the release of the results in one general report and several reports on

TABLE 1.1
Topics Covered in the Population and Housing Censuses of
Four Pan-Malaysia Censuses, 1970–2000

Census Topics	1970	1980	1991	2000
Geographic Characteristics				
Place where person was found on Census Day	✓	✓	✓	x
Place of usual residence at time of Census	x	x	✓	✓
Demographic and Social Characteristics				
Sex	✓	✓	✓	✓
Age	✓	✓	✓	✓
Date of Birth	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marital Status	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ethnicity	✓	✓	✓	✓
Religion	✓	✓	✓	✓
Citizenship/residence status	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identity card colour	✓	✓	x	x
Language spoken	✓	✓	x	x
Disability	✓	✓	x	✓
Fertility and Mortality				
Number of children born alive	✓	✓	x	✓
Number of children living	✓	✓	x	✓
Age at first marriage	x	✓	x	x
Number of times married	✓	✓	x	x
Numbers of years married	✓	x	x	x
Migration Characteristics				
Birthplace	✓	✓	✓	✓
Period of residence in Malaysia	✓	✓	x	x
Period of residence in present locality	✓	✓	x	x
Place of last previous residence	x	✓	x	x
Reason for migration	x	✓	x	x
Place of residence five years ago	x	x	✓	✓
Year of first arrival in Malaysia	x	x	x	✓
Education Characteristics				
Literacy	✓	✓	x	✓
School attendance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Highest level of schooling attained	✓	✓	✓	✓
Highest educational certificate obtained	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vocational training	✓	✓	x	x
Field of study	x	x	x	✓
Place of obtain certificate/diploma/degree	x	x	x	✓
Economic Characteristics				
Type of economic activity (during previous week)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Number of hours worked (during previous week)	x	x	✓	✓
Type of economic activity (during last 12 months)	✓	✓	x	x
Occupation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Industry	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employment status	✓	✓	✓	✓
Occupation sector (government/pte/individual)	x	x	x	✓

subject basis. No state reports for the thirteen states were published. The latest was held on 6 July 2010, but very little about the conduct of the census is known.

The other sources of statistics used in our study of the population of Malaysia are the well-established system of registering births and deaths and the annual survey of labour force started in the 1970s. Compulsory registration of births and deaths were first introduced in 1872 in Penang and Malacca, followed by the other states in later years. It was only in 1934 that the whole of West Malaysia, and many years later in Sabah and Sarawak, that birth and death registration became compulsory. Although the Registrar-General of Births and Death is responsible for the registration of births and deaths,¹⁸ the vital statistics derived from this system are processed and published by the Department of Statistics. This Department is also responsible for conducting the annual labour force survey, and the statistics are published in an annual report.¹⁹ The chapter on labour force is based entirely on data compiled from the annual labour force surveys rather than from the decennial population census.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

The operation of a population census in a country is normally executed at the various administrative levels; the census statistics for some topics are published according to small geographical units. In Malaysia, the whole country has been divided into 13 states, 11 in West Malaysia and 2 in East Malaysia. In addition, there are two smaller areas designated as federal territories, Kuala Lumpur and Labuan. Kuala Lumpur, with a population of 1.67 million, was formerly part of Selangor; it is the seat of the Federal Government and centre for business. Labuan, with a tiny population of 85,272, was converted into a federal territory from the former district of Labuan in Sabah. In our study at state level, we have decided to treat Labuan as part of Sabah rather than a separate entity since this arrangement will have an extremely negligible effect on the regional analysis of the population. On account of its importance viewed in terms of population, commercial activity and administrative function, Kuala Lumpur will be treated as a separate unit rather than merged with Selangor state when the relevant statistics are available.

Each of the states in West Malaysia, except Kelantan, is divided into districts, and each district is sub-divided into mukims. The administration of each district is under a District Officer and each mukim is under the charge of a Penghulu. In Kelantan, the administrative district is known as *jajahan*, divided into *daerahs* and further divided into mukims. The state of Sabah is divided into administrative districts, but each of these districts has not been sub-divided into smaller units. The other eastern state of Sarawak is divided into 9 divisions, which are sub-divided into administrative districts. There are no mukims in these two states.

Because of its small size, Perlis has not been subdivided into administrative districts. Similarly, Kuala Lumpur and Labuan are special cases and have not been divided into administrative districts. At the time of the population census in 2010, there were 134 administrative districts, in addition to the 2 federal territories. Some of the statistics collected in the population censuses are presented at the district level, and in rare cases even at the mukim level.

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