

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

► **Business appointments**

Experienced Canadian exporters have found that a prospective Malaysian client must be assured of the commitment of the company and the quality of the product(s) he or she is considering. The best introduction to Malaysia and its business opportunities is through a personal visit, since local businesses prefer to meet and deal with their prospective suppliers. When you arrive in Malaysia, you face the challenge of convincing local buyers of your competitiveness and the value of your products. The establishment of legitimacy and a long-term commitment is of primary importance to a successful business strategy.

The pursuit of contacts with the Malaysian business community and a generally conservative approach to business play a significant role in Canadian business strategy. Knowledge of Malaysian business methods and customs is also important. A good local representative will usually arrange meetings, ensure compliance with local business practices and act as a facilitator. Often, the first meeting serves as a get-acquainted session during which the buyer can evaluate your capabilities against current sources. Social interaction can be central to the process of business development.

You should plan to arrive on time for business appointments, bearing in mind that traffic can be congested in certain areas at certain times and taxis are not always available.

A complete product and company presentation should be made in the initial stages of business contact. This may include literature, specifications, samples and prices, and delivery and quality control information to allow the buyer to evaluate both you and product or service you offer.

When visiting new markets, experienced exporters ensure that they have product literature and samples (if appropriate), an ample supply of business cards, company letterhead and thank-you notes, extra passport photos, and small give-aways with their company name or logo.

- **In Malaysia, you should focus the bulk of your attention on the highest ranking individual/official with whom your meeting is scheduled.**

Malaysian society is hierarchy-conscious. When meeting with Malaysians, Westerners often make the mistake of addressing the room or group rather than the VIP. Make eye contact. Avoid preaching/lecturing at all costs and listen attentively. Body language such as yawning or lounging during meetings, pointing with the index finger and putting feet up on a table is rude and inappropriate, as are loud voices, theatrics, rowdiness and boisterous conversation. (Pointing at either objects or people when necessary, is done using a loosely closed fist with the thumb perched on top as a pointer.)