

Luther.

Immigration into Malaysia



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Immigration into Malaysia: Visa and work permits for expatriates

Malaysia's immigration policies are liberal and welcoming to expatriates. Besides general work permits for expatriates¹, several specialised visa types cater for all types of stays in Malaysia – including, *inter alia*, short business trips, urgent work deployments, remote working in the digital industry, long-term residency permits and retirement options.

Visa applications can usually be submitted online and are processed within one to two weeks. In-person appointments or submissions of original passports to a consulate or visa centre are normally not required. Even the final endorsement of the visa is done via electronic passes which can be downloaded and printed.

However, as is often the case, the devil is in the details. Applications for long-term visas generally require the prior registration of the employer with the Immigration Department and the requirement of additional approvals in certain sectors may delay the application process. For some positions, local employees would need to be considered first and the employment of a foreign expert may need to be justified. Underlying immigration policies are often not made public, and the policies can sometimes be rather vague or change without prior notice. Also, as in most countries, immigration decisions are usually subject to the discretion of the officers in charge.

At the same time, visa applications can be highly emotional for the applicants as delays or complications usually directly impact their personal life.

Planning immigration matters early and diligently is therefore a key factor for the success of an application and the overall project.

This guide aims to introduce the most relevant visa types for expatriates and investors (Part A), provide a comparison of the different visa types (Part B.), give an overview of the immigration process for work permits (Part C), and explore relevant additional immigration considerations and policies (Part D).

¹ The term "expatriate" is used here to differentiate from foreign workers employed for manual labour in the manufacturing, construction, agriculture, plantation and service industries, who are subject to separate immigration regulations.

A. Visa Types

The two most important visa types for expatriates in Malaysia are the **Employment Pass**, which is the standard work visa for expatriates who are employed in Malaysia, and the **Professional Visit Pass**, which is a visa for foreign experts assigned to a project in Malaysia without being employed in Malaysia (e.g. for installation works or trainings).²

However, other visa types may be better suited for short business trips or urgent technical assignments. Likewise, foreigners planning to live in Malaysia on a more permanent basis independent from a specific employer may opt for special long-term visa types.

The most relevant visa types for expatriates and investors are summarised below:

I. Short-Term Social Visit Pass

The standard visa for short touristic, social or business trips; usually granted upon arrival.

Nationals of most countries³ are eligible for a Short-Term Social Visit Pass ("ST-SVP") permitting a stay of up to 90 days, which is granted upon arrival in Malaysia. Passport holders of some countries⁴ (e.g., Bangladesh or Pakistan) must apply for the ST-SVP prior to their arrival in Malaysia.

1. Features

An ST-SVP permits stays for, *inter alia*, the following reasons:

- Visiting relatives;
- Tourism;
- Journalism / reporting;
- Meetings and conferences;
- Factory inspections;
- Auditing company accounts; and
- Contract negotiations and signings.

However, professional activities such as installation works, maintenance, repairs or other technical services are **not** allowed.

² This guide describes the most relevant visa types for West Malaysia. Different immigration policies apply for East Malaysia..

³ Nationals of North Korea and Israel are not eligible and require special approval.

⁴ <https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/main-services/visa/visa-requirement-by-country/>

2. Application Process

For nationals that are **not eligible** for an ST-SVP upon arrival, applications can be submitted online⁵ or to the closest embassy / consulate in the country of residence. The required supporting documents include a confirmed return flight booking, proof of accommodation in Malaysia, proof of sufficient funds to finance the stay and documents supporting the purpose of the stay (e.g. an invitation of a business partner or to a conference).

Nationals **eligible** for a ST-SVP upon arrival should be able to present such supporting documents to the immigration officers at the airport or other border crossing when entering into Malaysia, if requested.

3. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

ST-SVPs are generally single-entry visas. They are valid for a period of up to 90 days, depending on the nationality of the foreigner. ST-SVPs are not renewable.

II. Multiple Entry eVisa

Multiple Entry eVisas are a special type of ST-SVP for multiple short term stays within a certain period.

Foreigners that are not eligible for an ST-SVP upon arrival may apply for a so-called Multiple Entry eVisa (“MEV”), which allows them to enter into and exit from Malaysia for a specific purpose during a limited period of time without having to reapply for a new ST-SVP for each entry. The MEV is therefore not a separate visa type but a multiple-entry ST-SVP.

1. Features

An MEV allows a foreigner to enter Malaysia for several short-term stays for up to 90 days per visit (depending on the nationality of the applicant) during a term of 3 to 6 months.

MEVs can be issued for the following purposes:

- Business (limited to business meetings, factory inspections, conferences, and other activities not requiring a work permit⁶);
- Medical treatment;
- Wedding tourism; or
- Fly & Cruise.

⁵ <https://malaysiavisa.imi.gov.my/evisa/evisa.jsp>

⁶ A business MEV does not allow the provision of any professional or technical services. Please refer to the PLS@Xpats permit (see Part A.III. below), PVP (see Part A.IV.) and EP (Part A.VI.) for visa types allowing the provision of professional services in Malaysia.

⁷ <https://malaysiavisa.imi.gov.my/evisa/evisa.jsp>

2. Application Process

An application for an MEV can be submitted online⁷ by the applicant. In addition to the application documents required for an ST-SVP, applicants must provide documents supporting the specific purpose of their stay. This could be an invitation letter from a business partner, proof of the intended medical treatment, an invitation or booking for a wedding in Malaysia or the booking for a cruise starting and ending in Malaysia.

3. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

The approval of an MEV is issued online and must be presented upon arrival in Malaysia.

The duration of each stay during the term of the MEV is limited to the maximum duration of an ST-SVP based on the nationality of the applicant.

MEVs are not renewable, but a new visa may be applied for.

III. PLS@Xpats

A special short-term work permit for urgent work assignments.

The PLS@Xpats programme was introduced in 2022 as a result of the private sector’s demand for a short-term visa allowing foreign experts to enter the country to provide urgent technical work without a lengthy and complex visa application process.

1. Features

The PLS@Xpats work permission can be granted for the following purposes:

- Emergency work;
- Repair works;
- Installations;
- Recovery and reinstallation works;
- Maintenance;
- Testing and commissioning; and
- Other urgent tasks.

2. Requirements

The PLS@Xpats is technically not an independent visa type but a special working permission to conduct urgent work under an ST-SVP. It is accordingly important to note that if the foreign expert is not eligible for an ST-SVP upon arrival, the expert must apply for an ST-SVP separately.

PLS@Xpats permissions are available for most industry sectors.

Applicants must explain why a foreign expert is required for a particular task and why the task is urgent or critical for the operation of its business in Malaysia. The application must also be supported by an invitation letter from the local entity for whom the task is to be performed.

3. Application Process

Applications can be submitted online by the Malaysian entity for whom the task is performed, the foreign expert's employer or a service provider via a special portal.⁸

The official processing time is 3 to 5 working days from the date of submission.

4. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

The PLS@Xpats approval letter must be presented together with the supporting documents for the ST-SVP during the immigration process upon arrival in Malaysia.

The maximum duration of stay under a PLS@Xpats is 30 days. Renewals or extensions are not allowed.

IV. Professional Visit Pass

The standard short- or long-term work permit for work assignments of experts employed abroad.

Longer or non-urgent work deployments of foreign experts, who are employed abroad, require a Professional Visit Pass ("PVP"). PVPs require a local sponsor, who invites the foreign expert for a specific task. The local sponsor must submit the application for the PVP via its own registered immigration account.

1. Features

PVPs are granted for the following purposes:

- The transfer of expertise (or tasks requiring special expertise otherwise not available);
- Research;
- Training;
- Volunteering;
- Exhibitions; and
- Internships.

The foreign expert must be employed by a foreign entity and may not receive a salary from the local sponsor.

Family members of PVP holders are not eligible for special dependent visas.

2. Requirements

The foreign expert must hold the following minimum qualifications:

- A university degree and at least 3 years' professional experience in the relevant field;
- A diploma – a special qualification below university-level (not to be confused up with what is known as *Diplom* in Central Europe) – and at least 5 years' professional experience; or
- A technical certificate and at least 7 years' professional experience.

The local sponsor must justify why the foreign expert is required for the specific task. This may require detailed justification letters and additional supporting documents evidencing the need for the foreign expert.

3. Application Process

The application for a PVP can only be submitted by the local sponsor after registering with the Expatriate Service Division of the Immigration Department of Malaysia ("ESD") (for details, please see Part C below).

The application process usually takes between 14 and 21 working days. However, if the local company has not yet registered with ESD, a longer period of time will be required from the start of the immigration account set-up to the granting of the work permit.

⁸ <https://malaysiavisa.imi.gov.my/evisa/evisa.js>

4. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

PVPs can be granted for a maximum period of one year. A foreign expert can only obtain a PVP for up to a total validity period of one year under the same sponsor (e.g. a single PVP for a period of one year or 4 separate PVPs for a period of 3 months each over several years).

PVPs are generally not renewable.

PVPs are only endorsed after entry into Malaysia – previously, this took the form of a physical sticker pasted into the passport, but this is now done via e-pass (for details, please see Part D below). In order to enter into Malaysia legally, the foreign experts must obtain a so-called Single Entry Visa (“SEV”) from a Malaysian consulate in their country of residence. Applications for SEVs can also be submitted online.⁹ The expatriate must also submit a Malaysia Digital Arrival Card (“MDAC”) online before their first entry into the country.¹⁰

V. DE Rantau Nomad Pass

A special visa for freelancers, independent contractors and remote workers.

A special visa for freelancers, independent contractors and remote workers in tech and non-tech categories.

The DE Rantau Nomad Pass (“DE-RNP”) is a special type of PVP for digital nomads. It was introduced in 2022 and offers certain benefits to digital nomads compared to regular PVP holders.

Applicants falling under the “tech talent/profession” categories may be digital freelancers, independent contractors and remote workers working in the IT industry (including *inter alia* software development, UX, UI, cloud services, cybersecurity, blockchain, AI, machine learning, and big data), digital marketing, digital creative content creation and similar digital industries.

Those falling under the “non-tech talent/profession” categories may be CEOs, CFOs, COOs, business developers, marketing managers, finance managers/accountants, sales managers, customer success managers, human resources managers, legal counsels, public relation managers, consultants,

customer service managers/ customer service representatives/ customer success specialist, communications & public relations managers, administration managers, technical writers, tax specialists, tax accountants, production managers, supply chain managers or any position equivalent to those listed.

1. Features

The DE-RNP allows eligible freelancers, contractors, and remote workers to live and work in Malaysia independent from a specific employer for up to one year with an option for renewal for a second year.

In contrast to a regular PVP, the sponsorship requirement for DE-RNPs is much easier to fulfil. A sponsor is needed, but if no local sponsor or foreign employer can be found, the Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation (“MDEC”)¹¹ can act as sponsor against the payment of a security bond of between MYR 200 and MYR 2,000 depending on the nationality of the applicant.

DE-RNP holders may bring their spouse and underage children with them. Children under a DE-RNP require a separate “Permission to Study” to attend school in Malaysia.

Holders of DE-RNPs may also be eligible for additional benefits under the DE Rantau programme.

2. Requirements

Applicants must work as freelancers, independent contractors or remote workers with a contract of more than 3 months and must be able to evidence this work with supporting documents.

Applicants must prove an annual income exceeding USD 24,000 for tech professionals and USD 60,000 for non-tech professionals.

⁹ <https://malaysiavisa.imi.gov.my/evisa/evisa.jsp>

¹⁰ This applies to nearly all foreigners entering Malaysia, with some exceptions such as Singapore passport holder or diplomatic passport holders. Foreigners holding long-term visa (EP, PVP, etc.) must submit the MDAC upon their first entry into the country but are exempted from this requirement thereafter. <https://imigresen-online.imi.gov.my/mdac/main?registerMain>

¹¹ MDEC is a government agency under the purview of the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia. It oversees the implementation of Malaysia’s initiatives to strengthen and grow the digital industry in Malaysia. In this context, MDEC also processes visa applications for expatriates working in the digital industry..

3. Application Process

Digital nomads can apply for the DE-RNP directly via an online portal.¹² The application must not be submitted by a sponsor and does not require a prior registration with ESD.¹³

Applications are processed within 6 to 8 weeks from the date of submission of the complete documents.

4. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

The DE-RNP is only endorsed upon arrival in Malaysia. The applicant must therefore apply for a SEV before departing for Malaysia.

A DE-RNP can be granted for a period of up to one year and can generally be renewed for a second year.

VI. Employment Pass

The standard work permit for expatriates working in Malaysia.

The most common work permit in Malaysia is the Employment Pass (“EP”).

1. Features

The EP is a multiple-entry residence visa and work permit, that allows foreigners to live and work in Malaysia over the term of the validity of the EP.

However, EPs are always linked to a specific employer in Malaysia. Employments with additional employers are not allowed. A change of the employer requires the cancellation of the earlier EP under former employer and the issuance of a new EP under the new employer.

2. Requirements

There are three categories of EPs with different features and requirements:

a. Category I

Effective 1 June 2026, an EP Category I requires a minimum monthly salary of MYR 20,000 (increased from MYR 10,000 previously). If granted, its maximum validity is 5 years; a validity period of between 1 to 3 years is, however, more common.

Holders of an EP Category I may apply for Dependent Passes (“DPs”) or Long-Term Social Visit Passes (“LT-SVPs”) for their immediate family members (see below under Parts A.VII. and A.VIII).

b. Category II

The minimum salary for an EP Category II is increased from MYR 5,000 to MYR 10,000 per month effective 1 June 2026. The maximum validity period of an EP Category II is 2 years. Family members can obtain DPs.

c. Category III

Finally, the EP Category III monthly minimum salary is also increased from MYR 3,000 to MYR 5,000 starting from 1 June 2026. However, an EP Category III requires special justification and additional approval from the Ministry of Home Affairs (“MOHA”). It can be granted for a maximum period of validity of 1 year and does not permit the issuance of DPs for family members.¹⁴

d. Further requirements

Expatriates must fulfil the following minimum qualifications to be eligible for an EP:

- A university degree and at least 3 years’ professional experience in the relevant field;
- A diploma and at least 5 years’ professional experience; or
- A technical certificate and at least 7 years’ professional experience.

¹² <https://mdec.my/derantau/foreign/>

¹³ Nationals of China and Bangladesh are required to provide a bank guarantee from a local bank in Malaysia. Generally, banks will only issue bank guarantees to persons who hold a long-term visa in Malaysia and have a bank account in Malaysia. As such, nationals of the aforementioned countries may approach banks in Malaysia for a bank guarantee application, but the decision to accept such applications will be at the discretion of the bank.

¹⁴ No announcements have been made yet as to whether the change of salary thresholds will also impact these requirements.

3. Application Process

The employer of the expatriate must submit the application for an EP via its registered online immigration account – for most employers, this is an account with ESD. Companies in the digital industry¹⁵ must, however, submit applications for EPs via the eXpats portal of MDEC.¹⁶ Finally, companies that are based in the state of Johor must submit EP applications via the Iskandar Regional Development Authority's XPATNOVA portal.¹⁷

The application is usually processed within 5 to 10 working days, but may also take longer.

Furthermore, additional prior approvals are required in certain industries (for example, in the manufacturing, tourism, financial, aviation, healthcare and construction industries). Applications for most sector-specific approvals can be submitted via the centralised Xpats Gateway platform of ESD and will be issued within 3 to 10 working days.¹⁸

More details on the application process for EPs are set out in Part C. below.

More details on the application process for EPs are set out in Part C. below.

4. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

The maximum period of validity for EPs depend on the category, as follows:

- 5 years for Category I;
- 2 years for Category II; and
- 1 year for Category III.

EPs for Category I and II are renewable. Holders of an EP Category III must leave the country for a cooling off period of at least three months after the EP has been renewed twice in a row or before reapplying with a different employer.

EPs are only endorsed upon arrival in Malaysia. The expatriate must therefore apply for an SEV online or at the Malaysian Consulate in their country of residence before travelling to Malaysia for the first time under the EP.

An EP can be renewed electronically without the need to submit the original passport to the authorities.

VII. Dependent Pass

The standard residence permit for spouses and children of expatriates.

Dependent Passes (“DPs”) allow the legal spouse of an EP holder and their children below 18 years of age to reside in Malaysia.

1. Features

DP holders are not allowed to work in Malaysia.

Before children of an EP holder can be enrolled in school in Malaysia, a “Permission to Study” must be obtained from the Immigration Department. The Permission to Study requires a letter from the intended school and is granted in most cases.

2. Requirements

In order to prove the dependent’s relationship to the EP holder, a translated and certified copy of the marriage certificate (for spouses) and birth certificate (for children) must be submitted together with the application.

3. Application Process

The application for the DP must be submitted by the employer of the EP holder. The application can be submitted together with the application for the EP or subsequently after the EP has been endorsed into the expatriate’s passport.

4. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

The validity of DPs is linked to the validity of the principal EP. DPs are generally renewable.

DPs are also endorsed upon arrival to Malaysia. The family members must therefore obtain an SEV for the first entry into Malaysia. DPs can be renewed electronically.

¹⁵ These refer to companies which are in the IT sectors and have been awarded the “Malaysia Digital” status – an incentive program for companies in the IT and digital industry under the purview of MDEC.

¹⁶ <https://mdec.my/expats/>

¹⁷ <https://xpatnova.com.my/irda/>

¹⁸ Depending on the tier of the sponsoring company within the ESD immigration system. The tier is based on a number of factors, including the issued capital, track record in immigration matters, revenue and industry of the sponsor

VIII. Long-Term Social Visit Pass

A residence permit for other family members of expatriates.

The Long-Term Social Visit Pass (“**LT-SVP**”) permits unmarried children over the age of 18 and below the age of 25 as well as parents, parents-in-law and “common law spouses” of EP holders to reside in Malaysia.

“Common law spouses” are non-married long-term partners, who live together in a legally recognised relationship in the home jurisdiction of the expatriate.

1. Features

LT-SVP holders are permitted to reside in Malaysia.

However, they are not allowed to work or study under an LT-SVP and cannot apply for Permission to Study.

2. Requirements

The relationship to the EP holder must be evidenced by a translated and certified birth certificate of the child (for children), of the EP holder (for parents) or of the spouse (for parents-in-law). For parents-in-law, the marriage certificate of the EP holder must also be provided.

The recognised relationship between the EP holder and the partner or common law spouse must be confirmed by an acknowledgement letter of the embassy or consulate of the home country of the EP holder.

Additionally, a personal bond signed and witnessed by any Malaysian national must be provided to ensure the LT-SVP holder’s compliance with the immigration laws of Malaysia.

3. Application Process

Applications for LT-SVPs must be submitted by the employer of the EP holder. Applications can be submitted together with the EP application or after the EP of the principal has been endorsed in their passport.

4. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

The maximum validity period of LT-SVPs is one year and linked to the validity of the principal EP. Renewals are possible.

LT-SVPs are endorsed after arrival to Malaysia. The LT-SVP holder must therefore apply for a SEV prior to the first entry into Malaysia.

IX. Investor Pass

A special visa allowing foreign investors to come in and out of Malaysia to manage their local investment.

The Investor Pass (“**IP**”) is a type of LT-SVP designed to enable foreign businesspersons and investors who have committed to invest in Malaysia through recognised investment agencies or relevant stakeholders, to enter and temporarily reside in Malaysia.

This new pass was implemented on 1 April 2025 and is administered by the ESD.

1. Features

The IP is a multiple entry visa for foreign investors for the purpose of seeking business opportunities, which is available to foreign investors in the following three categories:

- **New Investors:** Potential investors who have no investment record in Malaysia;
- **Investors in the Pipeline:** Potential investors who have expressed interest, are in negotiations with the Malaysian Government, or have submitted project approval applications to MIDA; and
- **Existing Investors:** Investors with a track record of investments in Malaysia and ownership of Malaysian-registered companies, but not employed by any company in Malaysia.

IP holders are permitted to remain in Peninsular Malaysia and the Federal Territory of Labuan, excluding Sabah and Sarawak for the duration of the permit, but are not allowed to engage in paid employment while in Malaysia.

Dependents are not permitted under an IP.

2. Requirements

Applicants must hold certain positions with decision-making authority, such as C-suite, Founder, Owner; CEO, Director, Company Shareholder, Manager, Financial Controller, etc. within a company registered in their country of origin.

Depending on the investor category, applicants must provide various documents supporting their investment plan such as invitation documents from the authorities, corporate and financial documents of parent company, confirmation documents from MIDA or Malaysian diplomatic missions.

3. Application Process

Applications must be submitted online via the Xpats Gateway system by the investor.

As part of the implementation of the IP, the authorities have indicated that applications will be processed within 5 to 7 working days upon submission of complete documentation.

4. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

The pass is initially valid for six months and may be extended for another six months, up to a maximum of twelve months. The extension must be applied for 30 days before the expiry of the IP.

X. Resident Pass – Talent

A long-term residence and work permit for expatriates which is independent from a specific employer.

A Resident Pass – Talent (“**RP-T**”) allows a foreign expert to live and work in Malaysia over a long term, independent of a specific employer. It also allows the foreigner to start their own business in Malaysia.

1. Features

An RP-T is issued to the expatriate directly and no sponsoring employer is required. RP-T holders therefore have flexibility to change their employers within Malaysia without having to apply for a new visa.

Expatriates staying in Malaysia under an RP-T are also permitted to set up their own business.

The spouse and underage children of the eligible expatriate may apply for dependent RP-Ts. Spouses holding a dependent RP-T are permitted to work in Malaysia as well.

Children over 18 years, parents and parents-in-law are eligible for a renewable one year LT-SVP.

2. Requirements

To be eligible for an RP-T, a foreigner must:

- Have worked in Malaysia for at least three years;
- Hold an EP with a remaining validity period of more than three months at the time of application;
- Earn a basic monthly income of at least MYR 15,000;
- Have paid income tax in Malaysia for at least two years;
- Hold a PhD, master’s or bachelor’s degree or diploma from a recognised university or a professional certificate from a recognised professional institute; and
- Possess at least five years of total work experience.

3. Application Process

The application for an RP-T can be submitted by the applicant online via a special portal.¹⁹ Applications are subject to the approval of a panel and are usually granted quite conservatively.

4. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

RP-Ts can be granted for a period of up to 10 years, however the pass will be issued for a maximum of 5 years at a time, and must be renewed to obtain the remaining 5 years. It is also possible to apply to renew the RP-T upon the completion of the 10-year period.

Certain tax declaration information must be updated to the RP-T account on a yearly basis.

XI. Malaysia My Second Home

A special visa for high net worth individuals to live, retire, and invest in Malaysia.

The Malaysia My Second Home Programme (“**MM2H**”) aims to attract high net worth individuals to live in Malaysia. It is primarily intended for foreigners from countries with diplomatic relations with Malaysia wishing to live, invest, and retire in Malaysia.

This MM2H is governed by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (“**MOTAC**”) in Malaysia.

¹⁹ <https://www.myxpats.com.my/rpt/>

1. Features

Initially aimed mostly at high-net-worth retirees, the MM2H programme has recently been extensively revised, with the minimum age and deposit amounts being lowered, and with multiple tiers being created. Spouses, unmarried and unemployed children under the age of 34 years, parents / parents-in-law, and foreign maid of the MM2H holder are also eligible for DPs under the MM2H.

MM2H holders are generally not allowed to work in Malaysia but may own and be a director of a local business. Participants over the age of 50 can obtain an additional approval to work part time.

MM2H holders are eligible for certain tax benefits (including *inter alia* immediate tax resident status, tax exemptions for certain types of foreign income and a tax exemption for the import or purchase of a car).

There are three possible categories of MM2H, which are based on several factors including the amount of the fixed deposit to be maintained in a Malaysian financial institution and the validity of the pass:

Category	Fixed deposit	Duration of pass
Platinum	USD 1 million	20 years
Gold	USD 500,000	15 years
Silver	USD 150,000	5 years

The MM2H pass is renewable every 5 years after the maximum number of years of the programme have been completed.

MM2H platinum holders are permitted to engage in business or investment activities, or pursue career opportunities, in Malaysia.

2. Requirements

- Be 25 years old or older; and
- Have fixed assets of at least USD 150,000 or more (depending on the preferred MM2H category).

Upon approval, a MM2H holders may withdraw a maximum of 50% of the principal fixed deposit value for the purpose of purchasing a residence, education, or medical and tourism activities in Malaysia.

It is compulsory for the MM2H holder to purchase and own a residence in Malaysia, which cannot be sold for 10 years. Depending on the category of MM2H and the location of the property, the value of the residence must also meet certain price thresholds.

Finally, the applicant must also undergo a medical check-up in a panel clinic or hospital appointed by MOTAC upon approval of the MM2H.

3. Application Process

Applications are usually submitted through a MOTAC-licensed MM2H tour operating business.

4. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

Under the MM2H Programme, the applicants will receive a hologram security sticker in their passport. The validity of the pass will depend on the approved length of the MM2H and the passport validity of the holder. It is usually valid for a maximum duration of 5 years, which can be renewed prior to its expiry.

MM2H holders and/or their spouse must reside in Malaysia for at least 90 days (cumulatively) in a year.

5. Sarawak MM2H

A single-tier Sarawak-based version of the MM2H (“**S-MM2H**”) is also offered by the state of Sarawak.

The conditions and process are overall the same, with a few key differences:

- A fixed deposit of USD 118,000 in a S-MM2H approved bank is required;
- Applicants must demonstrate that they either meet monthly income requirements (USD 2,400 for individuals, USD 3,500 with dependents) or that they have a certain level of savings (USD 24,000 for individuals, USD 48,000 with dependents);
- The purchase of a residence is not required, but it is encouraged; and
- S-MM2H holders must reside in Sarawak specifically for at least 30 cumulative days per year.

XII. Premium Visa Programme

A long-term visa for high net worth foreigners wishing to invest and reside in Malaysia.

The Premium Visa Programme (“**PVIP**”) is a long-term residency visa that allows high net worth foreigners to invest and reside in Malaysia for up to 20 years.

1. Features

The PVIP allows foreigners with a constant foreign income to live, work, invest and study in Malaysia without any minimum presence requirements. Unlike the MM2H, there is no minimum age requirement and successful applicants are allowed to take up employment in Malaysia as well as conduct their own business without any specific restrictions.

Participants in the PVIP can be accompanied by spouses, children (under the age of 21), parents, and foreign helpers.

2. Requirements

Applicants must prove a monthly foreign income of MYR 40,000 or an annual foreign income of MYR 480,000.

Applicants must also provide a letter of good conduct issued by their home country and a medical report from a private hospital or registered clinic in Malaysia. In addition, a proof of health insurance valid for Malaysia must be submitted.

A participation fee of MYR 200,000 for the principal applicant and MYR 100,000 for each dependent is payable upon application. Thereafter, an annual pass fee of MYR 2,000 per person applies.

No proof of liquid assets, no minimum age, and no minimum duration of stay per year is required.

Upon approval, participants must place a fixed deposit of MYR 1 million at a local bank, which may generally not be withdrawn during the term of the visa. However, 50% of the deposit can be withdrawn after one year for the purchase of real estate in Malaysia or for medical and educational purposes upon approval of the Immigration Department.

3. Application Process

Applications for a visa under the PVIP must be submitted via licensed agents and cannot be submitted by the applicant directly.

The fixed deposit must be paid after the application has been approved and before the visa is endorsed in the passport.

4. Immigration, Validity, Renewal

The approved PVIP visa will be endorsed in the participant's passport after arrival in Malaysia.

PVIP visas are approved for 20 years, but the passes will be granted in four separate 5-year periods. An extension of an additional 20-year term can be applied for six months before the pass expires.

B. Overview

Pass	Work permit	Maximum validity	Renewal possible	Visa for family members	Local sponsor required	Application process	Processing time	Endorsement required
ST-SVP	No, only business meetings	Up to 90 days	No	No	No	Online or on arrival	2 working days or on arrival	No
MEV	No, only business meetings	3 to 6 months; up to 90 days per stay	No	No	No	Online	2 working days	No
PLS@Xpats	Yes, for specific project	30 days	No	No	Yes	Online by sponsor or employer	3 working days	No
PVP	Yes, for specific project and specific sponsor	1 year	No	No	Yes	By local sponsor via ESD account	14 to 21 days	Yes
DE-RNP	Yes, for specific industries	1 year	Yes, once for a second year	Yes	No	Online by applicant	6 to 8 weeks	Yes
EP	Yes, for one specific local employer	5 years	Yes	Yes	Yes	By employer via ESD account	5 to 10 working days	Yes / ePass available
DP	No	5 years	Yes	N/A	Yes	By employer via ESD account	14 to 21 days	Yes / ePass available
LT-SVP	No	1 year	Yes	N/A	Yes	By employer via ESD account	14 to 21 days	Yes
IP	No	6 months	Yes, for another 6 months	No	No	Online by applicant	5 working days	Yes
RP-T	Yes	10 years	Yes	Yes	No	Online by applicant	21 working days to 3 months	Yes
MM2H	No	5 years	Yes	Yes	No	By agent or online	3 to 6 months	Yes
PVIP	Yes	20 years	Yes	Yes	No	By agent	2 to 6 months	Yes

C. The application process for EPs and PVPs in detail

Applications for most short-term and special visas can be submitted online via various platforms. This includes, in particular, applications for ST-SVP, MEV, PLS@Xpats, DE-RNP, IP, RP-T, PVIP and MM2H. The applicant must usually first register for an account under the respective portal, then complete the online application form and upload the supporting documents, and finally, submit the application. The applicant can later download the approval by logging into their account.

Service providers can assist with the preparation of applications or handle the applications process in its entirety if required.

However, the application process is more complex for the standard long-term work permits (i.e. EP and PVP) as well as for DPs and LT-SVPs for family members. Applications can only be submitted by the employers/sponsors of the expatriates through prior approved accounts with the immigration authorities and upon receiving a general approval to employ foreigners by the Department of Labour. In some instances, additional approvals and recommendations are required. In addition, a special single-entry visa is required for the expatriate to travel to Malaysia and finally, the visa must be endorsed in the passport after the expatriate's arrival.

If an employer does not yet have the required immigration account and has never applied for an EP or PVP before, the whole process from account registration to endorsement of the visa into the passport can exceed 6 months. Timely and meticulous planning is therefore of the utmost importance for the successful issuance of an EP or PVP.

In the following sections, the individual steps of an EP application are set out to illustrate the process:

I. ESD Account

The first step for an application for an EP is the registration of an account with the Expatriate Service Division ("**ESD**") of the Immigration Department²⁰ by the employer.

This account can be opened at any time without any specific EP application being made. Hence, if a company generally plans to employ expatriates or sponsor PVPs for a foreign

expert, it is recommended that it registers an ESD account immediately and does not wait until a visa for a specific expatriate is required.

1. Requirements

Only companies registered in Malaysia, societies and certain other organisations can open accounts with the ESD. Foreign owned Malaysian companies²¹ must have a minimum paid-up capital of MYR 500,000 and hold all licences required for their business to be eligible to open an account.²²

Companies must also be able to present a Business Premises License for their office or other business address.

2. Registration Process

The registration of an ESD account can be completed online and requires the approval of the ESD. After the application has been submitted together with all supporting documents, the official processing time for the approval is approximately one month.

3. Authorised officers for immigration matters

Upon approval of the account registration, the company must appoint

- one of their directors as an "authorised director";
- in most cases, their head of human resources as so-called "endorser" and "login-ID user"; and
- up to four staff members or service providers as "submission officers"

by submitting a "Letter of Undertaking" ("**LoU**") to the ESD.

These persons are authorised to administer the company's ESD account and, depending on their role, authorise or submit applications. Usually, companies choose to appoint service providers as submission officers so that they can handle the correspondence with the immigration officers and submit documents over the counter to the Immigration Department, if required.

The LoU must be signed and presented by the named director in person at the Immigration Department.

²⁰ The ESD is the approving agency for EPs, PVPs, DPs and LT-SVPs for entities in most industries. However, applications of entities in the digital industry must be submitted via the eXpat portal to MDEC and applications for companies based in the state of Johor will need to be submitted via the XPATNOVA. The process is roughly the same under the respective approving agencies.

²¹ 51% foreign shareholding or more

²² Foreign owned companies in the wholesale, retail and trade sector as well as in various service sectors require a minimum paid-up capital of MYR 1 million.

II. Workforce Projection

The next step after the account registration and the appointment of the authorised officers is the submission of a so-called workforce projection to ESD.

As of 1 April 2023, applications for workforce projections no longer require the submission of and are automatically approved once submitted.

It is therefore only necessary as a technical step to activate the application function for the individual EP and PVP slots within a company's ESD account.

III. Advertisement of positions

It is generally mandatory for employers to advertise vacancies for at least 14 days to local candidates on the government-run job platform "MYFutureJobs" before such positions can be filled by expatriates. While the job vacancy is advertised, employers will need to conduct interviews with potential local candidates.

If no suitable local candidate can be found by the eighth day of the advertising period, a "Hiring Outcome Report" detailing the company's efforts to find a local employee for the position can be submitted to the officers at the Social Security Organisation ("SOCSO") via email for endorsement. This endorsement is then submitted via the MYFutureJobs portal to request approval to hire an expatriate. If approved, a "recommendation letter" is issued within 3 to 5 working days and the employer can proceed with the application for an EP for the expatriate candidate.

However, this strict requirement is only of limited relevance in practice. One of several automatic exemptions generally applies to most expatriates. In particular, the following positions do not need to be advertised to local candidates before expatriates can be employed:

- Key management positions;
- Positions earning a monthly salary of MYR 15,000 or more;²³
- Positions filled by shareholders or owners of the employer; and
- Positions filled by expatriates transferred from group companies.

²³ No announcements have been made yet as to whether the change of salary thresholds mentioned in Part A.VI.2 above will also impact this exemption.

IV. General Approval of Labour Department

Employers are obliged to obtain the approval of the Director General of Labour before employing new foreign employees.

The application for approval can be submitted online via the Xpats Gateway²⁴ portal. Employers must provide information on their business, their workforce, and the vacant position. The approval is usually granted within two weeks.

The approval is usually valid for one year for an unlimited number of additional foreign employees employed during this term.

The approval letter of the Director General of Labour is required for the application for the individual visa.

V. Approvals by other authorities

Furthermore, additional special approvals from other authorities are required in some industry sectors.²⁵

Applications for most sector-specific approvals can be submitted through the centralised Xpats Gateway.²⁶

The approvals are required before an EP application can be submitted and will need to be uploaded to the ESD account of the sponsoring company. Applications are processed within 3 to 10 working days depending on the tier of the sponsoring company within the immigration system.²⁷

VI. Submission of application and approval

Once the individual application function in the ESD account has been activated (after a workforce projection) and all other approvals obtained, the company can submit the individual application for an EP or PVP.

The entire application process is carried out online and does not require the presence of the expatriates or their original passports.

Applications should be prepared carefully in advance to avoid additional requests from the immigration officers during the process. It may, in particular, take time to organise all supporting documents, which include, *inter alia*, the employment agreement of the expatriate stamped by the

²⁴ <https://xpatsgateway.com.my/>

²⁵ Sectors requiring additional approvals include, *inter alia*, the manufacturing, financial services, healthcare, tourism, aviation, biotechnology, construction, education and mining sectors.

²⁶ <https://xpatsgateway.com.my/>

²⁷ A company's tier depends on a number of factors, including its paid-up capital, turnover, track record with the immigration authorities, the stage of the company's lifecycle and the strategic importance of the company's industry.

Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia, the detailed resume of the expatriate and a passport picture with a blue background.

After the submission, the processing time for the application is usually between 5 to 10 working days depending on the tier of the sponsoring company. However, at peak times, longer processing times are possible.

Upon approval, an approval letter and a so-called “VDR letter” are issued electronically.

VII. Immigration and Endorsement

A Visa with Reference (“VDR”) letter is needed by the expatriate to next arrange for a so-called Single Entry Visa (“SEV”) to enter into Malaysia before the actual EP or PVP is issued.

The SEV can be obtained online²⁸ or directly from the closest Malaysian consulate at the country of residency of the expatriate. The SEV is usually issued on the same day at a consulate or within two working days if requested online.

The expatriate can then travel to Malaysia and present the approved SEV to the immigration officers, who will affix an entry stamp into the passport.

This stamp is required for the last step, namely the issuance of the e-pass.

This can be done upon prior application directly upon arrival at Kuala Lumpur International Airport²⁹ or after the expatriate has entered the country.

Once the EP is issued, the expatriate is permitted to reside and work in Malaysia and can exit and enter the country freely during the validity of the visa. Long-term passholders may use the auto-gates for immigration at Kuala Lumpur International Airport for a faster immigration clearance process.

VIII. Cancellation and departure

Before an expatriate holding an EP or PVP permanently departs Malaysia, their pass must first be shortened. This is done via the sponsoring company’s ESD online account, and a Shorten Pass Slip will be issued upon approval. The expatriate must keep this slip and present it during departure checks. If the

expatriate leaves Malaysia before their pass has been shortened, the company must file an application to shorten the pass without the passport, supported by a police report and a letter of affidavit.

If no renewal or shortening application has been submitted by the expiry date of the pass, it cannot simply be left to expire. The company must then apply for exit clearance via their online account within 30 days of the pass expiring.

Dependants holding a DP or LT-SVP will have their visas automatically shortened (or included in exit clearance) when the principal EP/PVP is shortened.

Failure to submit the required shortening or exit clearance application may result in restrictions being placed on the company’s ESD account, including an inability to submit or pay for new applications, and potential account suspension.

IX. Summary

Although the above-described process may appear complex, repetitive and bureaucratic at a first glance, it is overall a well-working and modern system. The individual steps are standardised and can be completed online. The expatriate need not attend any appointments in person until the arrival in Malaysia and the entire process can be handled by the HR department of the employer or an external service provider.

However, if the required infrastructure is not set up in time and applications, are not planned early and prepared diligently, delays and complications are very likely. Proper planning is therefore the key to a successful expatriate onboarding process.

²⁸ <https://malaysiavisa.imi.gov.my/evisa/evisa.jsp>

²⁹ For EP, DP, LT-SVP, and PVP applicants arriving to Malaysia via Kuala Lumpur International Airport Terminal 1 or 2

D. Additional immigration considerations and policies

I. 1:3 Internship policy

In February 2025, the Ministry of Human Resources began trialling a new 1:3 internship policy.

Under this policy, companies seeking to hire expatriates are required to offer a structured, paid internship through the National Structured Internship Programme (“MySIP”) for each expatriate they hire.

1. Implementation

This policy is currently in its trial phase and applies to a select group of companies, but from 1 April 2026³⁰ it is intended to apply broadly to all companies granted approval for expatriate employment passes. Employers will need to register a MyNext account through which interns can be hired.³¹ A few exemptions will apply to the following employers:

- New companies operating in Malaysia for less than two years;
- Representative or regional offices;
- Companies that receive government tax exemptions in key sectors (such as digital or energy);
- Other cases as determined by the relevant committee during the trial phase.

There are currently no direct penalties for non-compliance, however, the authorities have indicated that adherence may influence future expatriate pass approvals.

2. Internship quotas and requirements

These internships must last a minimum of 10 weeks, and be paid MYR 500 to MYR 600 depending on the level of study.

For every approved expatriate EP (including categories 1, 2 and 3), companies must offer a certain number of internships or work-based learning placements for local talent. The number of internships to be offered will be based on the category of the EP, as indicated in the table below, and is capped at 2% of the company’s total workforce.

EP Category	Number of interns
I	three
II	two
III	one

3. Incentives

Employers participating in MySIP can claim a double tax deduction on monthly allowances paid to interns (with no upper limit), as well as up to MYR 5,000 per intern per year for related expenses such as training or logistics. This financial incentive is intended to offset the costs of providing quality internship experiences.

SMEs and start-ups may also receive matching grants of up to MYR 250 to 300 per intern per month.

II. Automatic cancellations

Since October 2024, any immigration applications that have been unused or unattended for more than 90 days are automatically cancelled. This also applies to applications which are returned in the ESD system with questions or requests.

The system will send applicants and agencies reminders before cancellation.

Visa fees already paid for cancelled applications are non-refundable. As such, businesses and individuals should ensure they manage their applications correctly to avoid mistakes.

III. Compulsory “Change of Category” letter

Expatriates who change positions or Employment Pass categories within Malaysia must now have their previous pass revoked and a new one issued. In order to obtain the cancellation and re-issuance of the work permit, employers are required to present a ‘Change of Category’ letter for the new request.

³⁰ Although initially scheduled to end on 31 December 2025, the pilot phase was extended to 31 March 2026.

³¹ <https://www.mynext.my/>

IV. Critical occupations list

Although Malaysia does not have an official 'skill shortage list', it does have a Critical Occupations List ("MyCOL").

If a career title is listed in the MyCOL, the associated EP application is more likely to be approved and benefit from fast-tracking. Some of the general positions included are:

- Civil and structural engineers
- Software engineers
- Airline pilots
- Financial analysts
- Environmental scientists
- Healthcare practitioners

V. E-pass

The e-pass is an electronic immigration pass which was re-introduced in March 2025 for approved applications for certain visas (including RP-Ts, EPs, DPs, LT-SVPs and DPs). Replacing traditional physical passport endorsements, the e-pass is a digital document that can be downloaded and presented alongside the passport. The e-pass contains a QR code for easy verification by the relevant authorities. It can, in principle, be used in digital format only, although printing is generally recommended to avoid any digital issues.

The e-pass was intended to streamline the endorsement process by allowing most steps to be completed online via the ESD system, reducing paperwork and minimising visits to immigration offices. It can also be processed faster than a physical sticker. The authorities have promoted the e-pass as a way of modernising and simplifying the management of immigration passes for businesses and expatriates, making processes faster, more flexible, and less dependent on physical documents. However, for expatriates, this means that instead of having the work permit affixed to their passport, they must now print and carry a second document with them.

VI. Immigration enforcement

For the past few years, the Malaysian government has been cracking down on illegal immigration and conducting an increasing number of raids. These enforcement operations are expected to intensify further, with joint efforts from multiple agencies.

In this context, the government launched the Migrant Repatriation Programme 2.0 in May 2024. This programme offers undocumented migrants in Peninsular Malaysia and Labuan the opportunity to return to their home countries

voluntarily and without facing prosecution until April 2026. Instead of criminal charges, participants must pay compound fines: MYR 500 for entering or staying without a valid pass; MYR 500 for overstaying; MYR 300 for breaching pass conditions; and MYR 20 for the obtention of the Special Pass. Children under 18 are exempt from fines, but must pay the Special Pass fee.

The programme excludes individuals who have previously registered for similar schemes but did not leave the country, individuals who are blacklisted by immigration authorities, and individuals who are wanted by the authorities. Spouses of Malaysian citizens who have overstayed are also instructed to report to the Immigration Department instead for special coordination.

In communications surrounding the new programme, the government has also reminded employers that they may also separately face severe penalties for hiring or harbouring undocumented migrants, including a fine of up to MYR 50,000 per worker, imprisonment of up to five years, and six strokes of the cane if convicted.

E. How we can help you

Our team has extensive experience in all immigration matters and our experts are well positioned to inter alia

- advise on immigration policies;
- manage and structure the expatriate onboarding process;
- set up and administer immigration accounts;
- prepare, submit and supervise visa applications;
- handle immigration emergencies and difficult applications;
- structure and manage applications, renewals, amendments and cancellations; and
- provide ad-hoc assistance.

F. Contact

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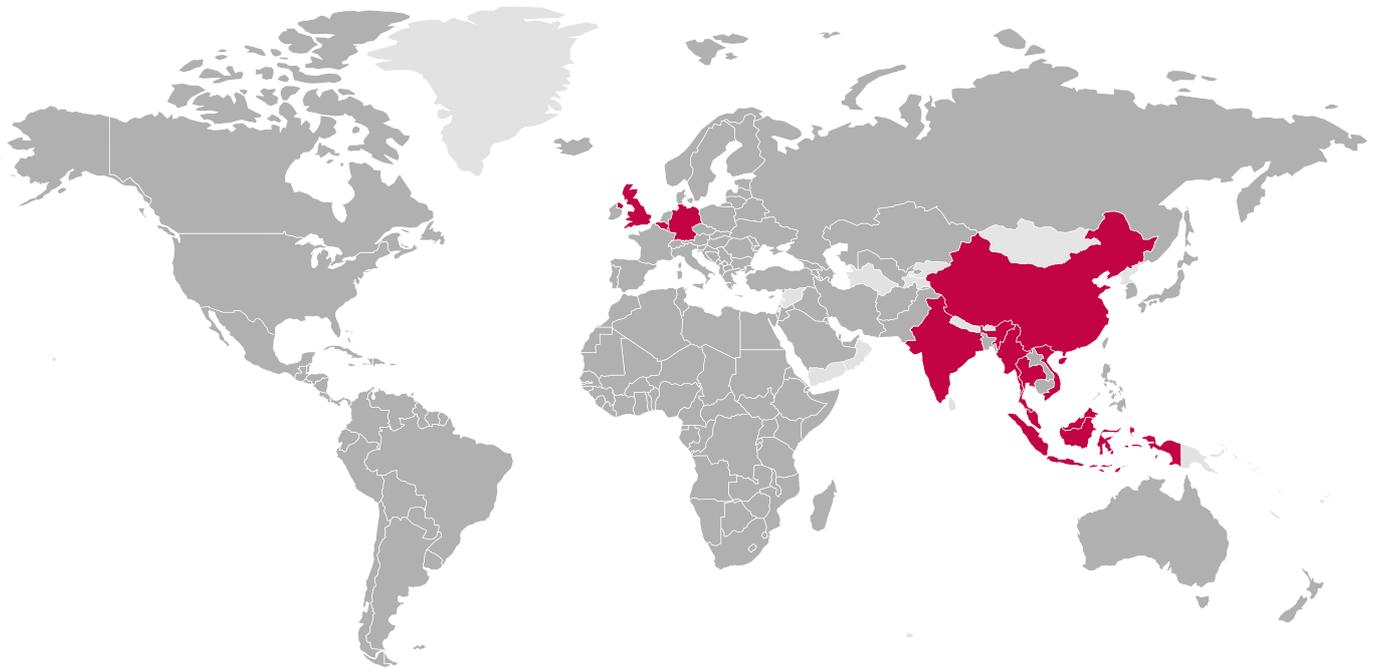
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Our awards



The Lawyer European Awards

Luther has been named “Law Firm of the Year: Germany 2024” by The Lawyer, one of the most well-known legal magazines worldwide.



JUVE

In the JUVE Guide of Commercial Law Firms 2024/2025, 58 lawyers from Luther were recommended, and eleven of these were also listed as “leading advisors” and three as “up and coming”. The legal publisher JUVE ranked Luther in 33 areas of law. In 2024, Luther won the JUVE Award “Law Firm of the Year - Regulatory Law”. Luther was also nominated as ‘Law Firm of the Year for M&A’. In 2019, Luther received the highest award from JUVE as ‘Law Firm of the Year 2019’.



Chambers

In 2025, Luther was recognised by Chambers Europe for 17 practice areas in Germany as well as in two practice areas in Luxembourg. In addition, 20 partners were included in the Individual Ranking. Moreover, in 2025, Luther was recognised by Chambers Global in five practice areas in Germany and in one each in Luxembourg and Myanmar, while nine partners were also included in the Individual Ranking.



The Legal 500

The Legal 500 Germany 2025 recommends Luther in 38 areas of law, with “Top Tier” rankings in two of these areas. 73 lawyers are being recommended, 19 of whom have been specially recognised as “Leading Individual” or “Next Generation Partner”. “The Legal 500 EMEA 2024” recommends Luther for seven areas of law in Luxembourg, and nine lawyers are also recommended, two of whom have been specially recognised as “Leading Individual”. “The Legal 500 Asia Pacific 2024” recommends Luther and two of its lawyers for one area of law in Myanmar.



The Legal 500 Green Guide EMEA 2025

Two Luther lawyers have been included in the recommendations for Germany in the Green Ambassadors Europe Guide 2025. This guide, published by Legal 500, recognises lawyers who are particularly committed to sustainability and the green transition - both in their client work and beyond.



Kanzleimonitor

Kanzleimonitor 2025/2026 recommends Luther in 20 areas of law. In addition, five Luther lawyers were listed in the individual recommendations, two of whom were even included in the top 100 lawyers.

Best Lawyers

Best Lawyers in Germany 2026

For the year 2026, 127 lawyers have been recommended by Luther as “Best Lawyers in Germany 2026”, an award presented by the US publisher “Best Lawyers” in cooperation with the German Handelsblatt, including two partners as “Lawyer of the Year” for his area of law, and 43 colleagues who have received the recommendation “Best Lawyers - Ones to Watch”.



Lexology Index

Lexology Index (formerly: WWL - Who's Who Legal) recommends a total of 27 lawyers in its June 2025 publications, nine of whom received the highest accolade of Thought Leader and two of whom were recognised as Future Leaders.

Imprint

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