

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

5 November 2007

### MYS102643.E

Malaysia: Reports of discrimination against Malaysians of Chinese descent (June 2004 - October 2007)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Chinese Malays represent approximately 25 percent of the population (HRWF 17 July 2007; *Asia Times Online* 24 Mar. 2006) and there are four Chinese-language newspapers in Malaysia (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 2a). Media sources indicate that Malays of Chinese origin "dominate" the business sector (AFP 29 Aug. 2005; *Asia Times Online* 24 Mar. 2006; Reuters 24 Aug. 2005). As well, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) is a political association which is part of the governing National Front (Barisan Nasional, BN), a coalition of 15 parties (Freedom House 2007).

According to media sources, Malaysia has known relative peace amongst its ethnic communities since riots against the Chinese minority occurred in 1969 (*Asia Times Online* 24 Mar. 2006; AFP 17 Nov. 2006; AFP 29 Aug. 2005). Although Islam is the official religion, the constitution guarantees religious freedom to minorities (HRWF 17 July 2007). Sources indicate that minorities are free to practise their culture and religion without restrictions and that the government does not impose restrictions in the field of education (AFP 29 Aug. 2005; *Asia Times Online* 24 Mar. 2006).

However, in 2005, the government renewed an affirmative action policy initiated in 1969 after the race riots (Freedom House 2007). Under governmental provisions, ethnic Malays and other indigenous people are given advantages concerning property ownership, civil service work, access to higher education and other benefits (US 6 Mar. 2007; *Asia Times Online* 24 Mar. 2006; Freedom House 2007). The affirmative action policy, known as the *New Economic Policy*, was adopted to lift the economic condition of ethnic Malays (ibid.). Sources indicate that the policy has created tensions among communities and a "feeling of being discriminated against" for minorities (AFP 29 Aug. 2005; *Asia Times Online* 24 Mar. 2006). According to *Asia Times Online*, the results of a survey on race relations published in March 2006 clearly indicated that racism and stereotyping are significant issues in Malaysia (ibid.).

Additional information on specific examples of discrimination against Malaysians of Chinese descent was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, according to the United States Department of State, the Malaysian police have been accused of ethnic profiling in arresting Chinese women deemed to be prostitutes (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 5). Furthermore, a 17 November 2006 Reuters article reported on a confrontation between protesters and Malaysian police officers following attempts by local authorities to demolish a Chinese temple on the island of Penang because it was not built with the proper approval.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

## References

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## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Suaram) and the National Human Rights Society Hakam did not respond to requests for information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** Asia Observer, Asian Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Malaysiakini, National Human Rights Society Hakam, One World, Southeast Asian Press Alliance, *The Star* (Malaysia).

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