



Australian High Commission
Malaysia

MEDIA RELEASE

**AUSTRALIA REFLECTS ON 70 YEARS IN MALAYSIA
AND CHARTS THE COURSE FOR 2026**

Kuala Lumpur, 19 December 2025 – The Australian High Commissioner in Malaysia today reflected on Australia’s landmark year in 2025 commemorating 70 years of diplomatic presence in Malaysia. The High Commissioner highlighted our seven decades of strong diplomatic, strategic and community ties which are founded on mutual trust, shared history, and common interests, as well as a commitment to regional prosperity. The High Commissioner also reflected on how the relationship continues to deepen across key sectors such as education, defence, trade and investment, climate, technology and innovation, and people-to-people links.

This year featured a series of flagship initiatives and commemorative events, including high-level visits (including Australia’s Prime Minister), business and investment missions, partnership agreements, and public diplomacy activities. In addition, as ASEAN’s first Dialogue Partner and Comprehensive Strategic Partner, Australia was proud to support Malaysia’s priorities as the 2025 ASEAN Chair.

The Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia, Her Excellency Ms Danielle Heinecke said, “Australia is pleased to be a longstanding partner to Malaysia and the region. 2025 has been a milestone year that not only showcased the enduring warmth between our two countries but also reflected our joint commitment to shaping the next chapter of our partnership. As we near the end of the year, Australia looks forward to working closely with Malaysia in 2026 to foster stability and promote shared prosperity in the region.”

In 2025, the strength of the Australia-Malaysia partnership and the breadth of our cooperation have been showcased through outcomes across multiple sectors and issues:



Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship

- Australia supported Malaysia's ASEAN Chair priorities, including on its thematic priorities of 'inclusivity and sustainability' through advisory support, seminars, workshops and training.
- This included support for the ASEAN EV Dialogue (June 2025), which brought together ASEAN and Australian officials working on EV policy, to examine regional approaches to battery manufacturing, use and recycling.
- Australia also supported the inaugural biennial ASEAN–Australia Cyber Policy Dialogue, second ASEAN Women, Peace and Security Summit, the ASEAN Care Economy Conference, and ASEAN ICT Forum on Child Online Protection, among others.

Education

- Australia and Malaysia reaffirmed their commitment to advancing cooperation in education with the signing of a MOU on schools education between the Australian Department of Education and Malaysian Ministry of Education in October 2025.
- Recent announcements expanding transnational education including: Monash's \$1 billion investment to develop a new campus in Kuala Lumpur, set to open in 2032 with a focus on energy transition, health, AI, and data science research; Swinburne University of Technology's new, 10-acre research and innovation institute focused on areas like energy transformation and advanced manufacturing.

Defence

- Commenced a RM450 million upgrade of infrastructure and facilities at RMAF Base Butterworth.
- The Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Malaysian Armed Forces achieved the milestone of 3,500 missions since the commencement of Operation Gateway in 1980.
- Australia and Malaysia conducted the first major bilateral special forces exercise together in Sabah.
- Australia and Malaysia co-chaired the ASEAN Maritime Cybersecurity Conference with the Ministry of Defence.

Security

- 2025 saw the inaugural year of Task Force Tiger, established between the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Royal Malaysian Police's Narcotics Crime Investigation Department to combat narcotics trafficking between Malaysia and Australia. The taskforce conducted eight successful operations disrupting over 1.9 tonnes of illicit drugs, seized in both Australia and Malaysia, including one of Malaysia's largest ever seizure of methamphetamine concealed in 32 Tonnes of paraffin wax, detected at Port Klang, enroute from Iran to Australia.


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- In November 2025, the AFP's newly appointed and first ever female Police Commissioner met with PDRM IGP (the Inspector-General of Police) during the 93rd Interpol General Assembly in Morocco, signing a joint statement, each committing to ongoing and increased law enforcement cooperation between Australia and Malaysia.
 - In September 2025, Australia and Malaysia renewed our cooperation on combatting transnational crime with the signing of an MOU between the Australian Department of Home Affairs and the Malaysian Ministry of Home Affairs.

Maritime

- Australia and Malaysia made significant progress on the implementation of our Maritime Cooperation package (announced by leaders in March 2024), including most recently hosting the second annual Malaysia-Australia Track 1.5 Dialogue for Maritime Cooperation in Canberra in December 2025, enhancing practical engagement.
- In November 2025, the Australian Border Force and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency signed a renewed Maritime Enforcement Cooperation MOU. The MOU reinforces our shared commitment to safeguarding regional waters, combatting transnational maritime crime, and enhancing joint cooperation and capabilities.
- In 2025, the Australian Border Force and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency delivered two iterations of the flagship maritime law enforcement program, Operation REDBACK, a week-long activity aimed at strengthening maritime borders and combatting transnational maritime crime. This includes addressing people smuggling, illegal fishing and prohibited imports through targeted operational patrols, community engagement, capacity building and strategic communications.

Trade, Tourism and Investment

- Australia hosted the first two corporate outbound business missions, under *Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2024*, to the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (June 2025) and the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit (October 2025).
- Australia's Special Envoy for Southeast Asia, Nicholas Moore AO, launched the Malaysia Prospectus, *Invested: Malaysia to 2040*, for which Business Champion, Tony Lombardo provided the Foreword.
- To-date, almost A\$1.2 billion in new Australian investment across Southeast Asia has been supported under *Invested*.
- In the year ending October 2025, a total of 207,000 Malaysian travellers visited Australia. They spent a total of A\$900 million. As of December 2025, flights have increased to 125 flights per week. Recent aviation developments in 2025 included AirAsia Malaysia's launch of the KL-Darwin service in June; Malaysia Airlines resumption of KL-Brisbane flights in November, increases in services to Melbourne and Sydney Perth and Adelaide as well as Malaysia Airlines and Qantas, announced in September a



new codeshare partnership that will offer travellers greater connectivity, enhanced benefits, and a seamless travel experience across Australia, Malaysia, and beyond.

Agriculture and Food Security

- Australia's agricultural exports to Malaysia have shown steady growth overall and across several key commodities, especially cotton with a compound annual growth rate of 107 per cent.
- In FY24-25, Australia's major exports to Malaysia included wheat (A\$399m/approx. RM1 billion), sheep meat (A\$288m/approx. RM778m), and milk and cream (A\$143m/approx. RM386m).

Green Energy and Climate

- Malaysia and Australia concluded Phase II of our cooperation on maritime decarbonisation, delivering a Green Bunkering Regulatory Roadmap to guide reforms to the bunkering sector.
- Sarawak Energy and Partnerships for Infrastructure developed analysis supporting greater penetration of renewable energy into the state grid.
- CSIRO and SEDA partnered to develop a joint study into the performance of consumer-grade energy storage systems in tropical climates.


Technology

- Australia's Cyber Ambassador undertook a visit to Malaysia in July 2025 to step up our collaboration to counter escalating cybersecurity risks, from artificial intelligence (AI)-powered attacks to ransomware targeting critical systems.
- Australian and Malaysian academics (Islamic University Malaysia and the University of Melbourne) worked with NACSA through the training of around 200 senior officials in strategic leadership and thinking to build cyber resilience in their organisations – and further trained around 170 leaders in best practices so they are better prepared for cyber incident response.

Economic Governance and Reform

- Australia established the Australia-Malaysia Kerjasama [Cooperation] Program, which will invest A\$13 million over four years to deepen collaboration on equitable economic growth, resilience and governance reform.
- This builds on existing cooperation with the Malaysian Government on institutional strengthening, and care sector reforms to increase women's labour force participation and access to quality care.

"Our focus in 2026 will be to strengthen our cooperation across all sectors and deliver practical, long-term benefits for both nations. As close friends and partners, Australia and Malaysia share



a vision for a stable, prosperous and sustainable region. Australia is committed to working with Malaysia to build on the progress of 2025 with a strong, forward-looking agenda for 2026 – underpinned by the key pillars of our partnership: economic prosperity, society and technology, and defence and regional security,” Ms Heinecke said.

Australia’s first Commission was established in Kuala Lumpur in 1955. TK (Tom) Critchley was appointed as Australia's first Commissioner in Malaya, a post he took up on 7 December 1955. Malaya established its first Commission in Canberra on 20 November 1956. The Commissions in Kuala Lumpur and Canberra became High Commissions when the Federation of Malaya formally became independent on 31 August 1957. Australia was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic ties with Malaysia.

Today, the partnership spans defence and security, education, agriculture, trade and investment, climate cooperation, technology, and community links. Malaysia hosts one of Australia’s largest overseas alumni communities and remains one of Australia’s most significant partners in Southeast Asia.

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Note: Media Imagery can be downloaded [here](#).