

## *HIGHLIGHTS*

- ◆ In the People's Republic of China (PRC), don't write notes using red ink. This suggests that the writer will die soon. Avoid using the number four at all costs because this, too, signifies death.
  
  - ◆ In Malaysia, many leading businessmen have been conferred with a titled name. Care must be taken that they're addressed properly.
  
  - ◆ In South Korea, don't fondle or scribble on your host's business card. He or she might be offended.
  
  - ◆ In India, the significance of a business arrangement is often determined by the amount of time spent in negotiations.
  
  - ◆ In Indonesia, never touch a person's head, or point with your forefinger, as this is considered impolite.
  
  - ◆ In Thailand, it is considered offensive to show the sole of the shoe or foot to another. It is therefore necessary to take care when crossing your legs.
  
  - ◆ In Japan, never expect a junior person to make an on-the-spot decision. Hierarchies must be respected and important decisions are usually made by senior executives.
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## ◆ CHINA

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ The official language in China is Mandarin, although Cantonese is the language commonly spoken in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong, adjacent to Hong Kong.
- ◆ English is not widely spoken in China, however most companies dealing with foreigners employ at least one Chinese-speaking staff member.
- ◆ If you intend to distribute written information about your company while in China, it is a good idea to provide your Chinese counterparts with written translations of the material. It is not necessary to reprint all documents using Chinese text, but you need to provide word-processed translations of the most important material. Often senior decision-makers in a Chinese organisation are unable to read English and the effort put into obtaining translations will be interpreted as an indication of your commitment to doing business with their company.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ Business cards are essential when conducting business in China. When distributing or receiving business cards, use both hands as a mark of respect.
- ◆ When receiving business cards, always pause and read each card individually. Never place the card immediately into your pocket or wallet. Cards printed in both English and Chinese are preferred.

### *FACE*

- ◆ It is essential to understand the concept of “face” when conducting business in China. Chinese people regard the respect of their peers and colleagues as a matter of the utmost importance. Conversely, to be humiliated or embarrassed in public is regarded with great shame.
  - ◆ This respect or status is regarded as “face”. It is very easy for a Chinese person to “gain” or “lose” face and foreigners conducting business in China must remain aware of the public image of the people they deal with.
  - ◆ In many respects, face is merely a matter of common courtesy. It is possible to give a person face by presenting prestigious gifts such as expensive, famous-brand liquor or cigarettes, by publicly praising good performance and by giving credit where credit is due.
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- ◆ Difficult situations must be handled delicately and without anger. To shout at a Chinese person in public, to reprimand them in front of their peers or to raise one's voice when exasperated will cause both parties to lose face and disrupt the negotiating process.
- ◆ Confrontations that place a Chinese person on the spot should be avoided and resolved quietly. Always refuse requests or invitations indirectly to avoid embarrassment.

### *GUANXI*

- ◆ The concept of “guanxi” lies at the heart of the Chinese business relationship. In Chinese, the word means “relationship” and can be summed up by the English terms “it's not what you know, it's who you know,” or “you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.”
- ◆ Essentially, to have “guanxi” means to have a network of useful contacts. It also means a relationship where the parties are bound by personal obligation to assist each other. Having “guanxi,” or a contact in an organisation, business, or government department can open doors to foreigners conducting business in China.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ Chinese people are not as formal about business attire as in Japan or Korea. However, it is usually advisable to wear a suit because the wearer gains face if well-presented.

### *FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT*

- ◆ Dining out is a popular method of establishing guanxi. Chinese business negotiations are often conducted over a long multi-course banquet. Large quantities of alcohol are usually consumed at these business functions and drinking is regarded as a useful social lubricant.
- ◆ Karaoke is a popular form of recreation for Chinese people and foreign business guests are encouraged to participate.

### *MONEY*

- ◆ China's official unit of currency is the yuan, or Renminbi. The yuan is divided into jiao and fen. Ten fen make one jiao and ten jiao make up one yuan.
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- ◆ Foreign currency and travellers' cheques can be converted into yuan at banks across the country, however US dollars are the preferred form of foreign currency. If venturing away from major cities in China, make sure you attend to all banking before setting off.
- ◆ Credit cards are slowly gaining acceptance in major Chinese cities. However, the use of credit cards is still not widespread across the country.
- ◆ Tipping is not customary in China.

### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ Try to send and receive mail from major cities where postal services have recently been upgraded and are now quite efficient.
- ◆ Most large hotels have an international telephone service from which calls can be placed overseas. In some hotels, local calls can be made for free from your hotel room. In large cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, modern international phone facilities are attached to selected post offices.

### *TITLES*

- ◆ Most Chinese names are three syllables long and Chinese surnames come before given names. Hence, a Chinese man named Jiang Li-hwa should be referred to as Mr Jiang. Many Chinese people use an English name when conducting business with foreigners.

### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ In Beijing, the international airport is located approximately 25 kilometres from the city centre. A cheap \$US1 airport shuttle bus travels the route and leaves from the front of the building. Tickets are sold from a desk inside the terminal, not on the bus itself.
- ◆ Taxis from the airport should cost around \$US15 to Tiananmen Square, but make sure you finalise the price before setting off or ensure the meter is turned on.
- ◆ In Shanghai, the airport is located 8 kilometres from the city centre. A taxi fare from the airport to the Bund should cost around \$US10.
- ◆ The airport in Guangzhou is located 10-12 kilometres from the city centre and it costs around \$US12 to make the journey by taxi.

### *GIFTS*

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- ◆ The best gifts to buy are prestige label luxury goods such as fine European alcohol products and tobacco goods for men and foreign (particularly French) cosmetics, goods and perfumes for women. Fine brandy, cognac and Scotch whisky are all highly regarded gifts for Chinese people.

### *GENERAL*

- ◆ Never write notes using red ink, as this can convey the idea that the writer will die soon.
- ◆ When setting down chopsticks between courses, never place them in the rice-bowl vertically or at an angle, as this resembles sticks of incense burned at a funeral and is considered highly inauspicious. Always lie chopsticks horizontally across the rim of the bowl.
- ◆ Chinese people are superstitious about the number four, which signifies death and should be avoided at all costs.
- ◆ Avoid discussions which may cause embarrassment such as death, divorce or politics.
- ◆ Be prepared to answer personal questions relating to your age, marital status, income and family background.

### *BUSINESS HOURS AND HOLIDAYS*

- ◆ Government offices usually open Monday to Friday between 8-9 am, close for two hours around midday and then re-open until 5 or 6pm. Most offices also open on Saturday mornings and remain open until noon. Private companies usually keep longer hours.
  - ◆ Avoid conducting business during Chinese New Year, which usually falls in late January or early February and often lasts for up to one week. Most businesses close at this time and it is very difficult to book transportation or accommodation.
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## **MALAYSIA**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ The official language of Malaysia is Bahasa Malaysia. English, Chinese and Tamil are also widely spoken and English is the principal language used in commerce and industry.

### *CLOTHING*

- ◆ Suits are preferred for formal meetings. However, a business shirt and tie or blouse and skirt are suitable for plant visits/ exhibition centres.
- ◆ Long-sleeved batik shirts can be worn by men when attending dinner parties, but very formal dinners require a lounge suit or evening gown.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ Malaysian names usually have two parts, as in the Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Anwar Ibrahim. When introduced to a Malaysian person, always refer to them by their first name, preceded by the appropriate term of address, eg Dr Mahathir or Mr Anwar. This rule applies to both male and female names.
- ◆ Many Malaysians in the business community are of Chinese descent and will usually have a three-syllable name in which the surname precedes the given names. Hence a Chinese Malaysian man named Lee Ming-teh should be referred to as "Mr Lee."
- ◆ Business cards are the norm during introductions. Warm handshakes are customary, however some Muslim women do not shake hands with the opposite sex.

### *TITLES*

- ◆ Many top Malaysian businessmen have been conferred awards which carry a titled name. Care must be taken that they be addressed properly
  - ◆ "Tun" is Malaysia's highest form of address. Only a handful in the country have received this honour - no more than a dozen. The Economic Adviser to the Government is Tun Daim Zainuddin. Daim is his given name and Zainuddin is his father's name. In terms of correct etiquette, he is referred to as "Tun Daim".
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- ◆ “Tun Sri” is the next-highest form of address. The Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, is a “Datuk Seri”. So is the International Trade and Industry Minister, Mrs Rafidah Aziz. Hence, she is known as Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz. but in view of her international profile, she is also comfortable being addressed as Minister Rafidah.
- ◆ The other significant award is “Datuk”. Many businessmen have been conferred “Datukships”.
- ◆ The wife of a Tun is known as “Toh Puan”. The wife of a “Tan Sri” is “Puan Sri”. The wife of a Datuk is known as “Datin”.

### *TRAFFIC*

- ◆ Kuala Lumpur, the capital city, is becoming very congested. The situation has not yet reached Bangkok proportions but is approaching these levels. It is likely to stay this way at least until the city's mass rapid transit system is in place in 1998. Seek local advice on how long it will take to get to appointments.

### *MONEY*

- ◆ The official unit of currency in Malaysia is the ringgit, which is divided into 100 sen. Malaysia has an advanced and efficient banking system and it is possible to change most currencies and travellers cheques' into ringgit at banks and money changers across the country. Credit cards are accepted at most large retail outlets, restaurants and hotels and cash advances can be obtained over the counter in banks and at designated automatic teller machines.
- ◆ It is unnecessary to leave a tip for services in Malaysia.

### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ Malaysia's post and telecommunications system is highly efficient and reliable. Post offices are open from 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday and until 12 noon on Saturday.
  - ◆ Long-distance phone calls can be direct dialled between all Malaysian cities and international direct-dial phone calls can be made from public phone booths across the country.
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### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS*

- ◆ Malaysia's international air traffic arrival points are located in Kuala Lumpur (KL) and Penang.
- ◆ KL International Airport is located approximately 45 minutes from the city's downtown area, but the journey can take longer during heavy traffic. A set-price taxi-voucher service operates from a booth located to the right of the terminal exit. Metered taxis can also be taken for the journey at a cost of approximately \$US10.
- ◆ Penang's Bayan Lepas Airport is located about 18 kilometres from downtown Georgetown. A taxi-voucher system also operates from a desk inside the airport terminal. The journey takes about 30 minutes.
- ◆ Duty free shopping at KL International is good and is recommended for last minute gift purchases.

### *MOBILE PHONES*

- ◆ Always switch cellular phones off during conferences and meetings.

### *FOOD*

- ◆ If you are hosting functions in Malaysia, never serve pork, as this will offend your Muslim guests. In addition, do not serve alcohol.

### *WORKING TIMES*

- ◆ Most government offices open at 8am and close at 4.15pm.
- ◆ Most private sector establishments open at 9am and close at 5pm.
- ◆ Banking hours are 10am to 3pm for most banks from Mondays to Fridays and from 9.30am to 11.30am on Saturdays.
- ◆ Almost all are closed on Sundays, but a few open on Sunday mornings.

### *GIFTS*

- ◆ When selecting gifts for Muslim Malaysians, avoid products made from pigskin and alcohol, as these goods contravene the laws of Islam. Most Chinese Malaysians,
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however, are not Muslims, and would welcome a gift of fine French brandy or scotch whisky.

- ◆ It is important to bear in mind the religion of your Malaysian counterpart when selecting gifts. Do not assume that a gift will be appropriate merely because it is made in a western country. Western goods are widely available throughout Malaysia.

### *GENERAL*

- ◆ Never exchange objects with Muslim people with the left hand, as this is considered unclean.
  - ◆ Avoid visiting Malaysia during the holy fasting month of Ramadan (usually mid-March to mid-April) as it may be difficult to conduct business at this time of the year.
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## **VIETNAM**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ English is not widely spoken in Vietnam, so it is advisable to check whether someone will be on hand to translate for you before visiting the country on business. Most large companies or any firm regularly involved in international trade will employ staff who can converse in English.
- ◆ If you intend to distribute written information in Vietnam, it would be prudent to prepare Vietnamese translations of this material beforehand. It is not necessary to reprint colour brochures in Vietnamese text but simple word-processed translations will be very useful. This gesture may be interpreted as a sign of your company's commitment to trading in Vietnam. Often the primary decision-maker in a Vietnamese organisation is not the English speaker with whom you are dealing. If you have Vietnamese language information about your company for senior management to examine, they may feel more comfortable about dealing with you.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ The climate in Vietnam can be very hot all year round, so it is advisable to make allowances for this when selecting your business wardrobe. Probably the most suitable business attire is a lightweight tropical suit for both men and women or smart trousers with a collar and tie for men, or a skirt and blouse for women.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ Always carry business cards when visiting Vietnam and distribute them at every business meeting.
  - ◆ When giving or receiving cards, do so with both hands as a sign of respect and always take a few seconds to study any cards handed to you. Never place a person's card immediately into your pocket without first studying it intently. Such a gesture would be considered dismissive and rude.
  - ◆ Vietnamese names list the surname last, so when referring to a Vietnamese person, use their last name, prefixed by the appropriate term of reference. Hence Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet should be referred to as Mr Kiet.
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### *MONEY*

- ◆ The official Vietnamese unit of currency is the dong. When visiting Vietnam, it is advisable to carry a supply of US dollars in both large and small denominations. Use large bills for standard currency conversions and small bills for emergency purchases, taxis etc. US dollars have become an unofficial second currency in Vietnam and are essential if you intend to spend a lengthy period of time in the country. Travellers' cheques in \$US can be exchanged at certain banks.
- ◆ If you intend travelling to regional or rural centres around Vietnam, try to finalise all financial transactions before setting off.
- ◆ Tipping is not customary in Vietnam.

### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ Post offices in major cities are open from 7.30 am until 7.30 pm.
- ◆ If your hotel lacks a fax, telex or telegraph service, Vietnamese post offices can provide these services at a reasonable price.
- ◆ Vietnamese telecommunications charges are among the highest in the world. The most convenient way to make an international telephone call is to use the services provided by most major hotels.

### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS*

- ◆ Vietnam's two main points of entry by air are Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) and Hanoi.
  - ◆ Ho Chi Minh's Tan Son Nhat international airport is located approximately seven kilometres from the city's downtown area. Allow around \$US7 for the taxi fare into town.
  - ◆ In Hanoi, the international airport is situated around 35 kilometres to the north of the city. The trip usually takes 45-50 minutes and costs approximately \$US15 in a taxi.
  - ◆ Always agree on the price of taxis before getting into the car in Vietnam. It is almost always necessary to bargain. Transport can be booked through a hotel.
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**GIFTS**

- ◆ Products which are not readily available in Vietnam make the most appropriate gifts, in particular luxury items such as foreign alcohol and tobacco products. Prestige label brandy or whisky is very popular, as are cartons of imported cigarettes.
- ◆ Cosmetics or foreign perfume may be an appropriate gift for women and American label clothing is particularly popular with young people.

**GENERAL**

- ◆ If taken to a temple, always remove your shoes before entering. If you are invited to a person's home, check to see if they remove their shoes when inside and, if they do, it is advisable to do the same.
  - ◆ Never point the bottoms of your feet towards any person or image of Buddhist statues. The feet are regarded as the least holy part of the body and this gesture is seen as disrespectful. Never touch a Buddhist person on the head, not even small children, as the head is considered the most sacred part of the body.
  - ◆ When dining in a Vietnamese restaurant, never leave your chopsticks sticking out of your rice bowl, as this resembles sticks of incense burned for the dead, and is considered a very inauspicious death sign.
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## **SOUTH KOREA**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ Standard Korean is spoken across the country. English is not widely spoken, although most major businesses will have some English-speaking staff.
- ◆ If you intend to distribute literature about your business when in South Korea, it is advisable to have Korean language information available, as many senior managers are unable to speak English. In view of the expense involved in printing costs, a simple word-processed translation may suffice. The effort put into the preparation of such a document may be interpreted as an indication of your company's commitment to the Korean market.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ First appearances count a great deal in Korea, so it is important to always wear a suit when conducting business. Women should always wear a smart, conservative outfit.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ Business cards are vitally important in Korea. Exchange cards whenever you meet someone new and always give and receive cards with both hands, as this is considered respectful.
  - ◆ When receiving another person's card, always take a few seconds to study it in their presence and never place it immediately into your pocket. A card signifies a person's status in the company you are dealing with, and it is polite to always show interest in their position.
  - ◆ Never fondle or write upon a person's card, as this is considered insulting.
  - ◆ Koreans will always shake hands at meetings, but it is also customary to bow slightly when shaking hands for the first time.
  - ◆ Korean names are usually three syllables long, with the surname preceding given names. Hence, a Korean man named Chang Kon-sang should be referred to as Mr Chang. Never refer to a Korean counterpart by their first name, particularly in front of other business people or their contemporaries.
  - ◆ Never hand a Korean person a business card with a Japanese translation of your name and corporate position, as this is considered highly insulting. Japan occupied Korea from 1910 to 1945, and your card may be interpreted as a reference to this period.
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### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ South Korea has a modern post and telecommunications system. Post offices are open from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday and until noon on Saturdays.
- ◆ Direct-dial long distance and international telephone calls can be made from public phone boxes across the country using either coins or telephone cards.

### *MONEY*

- ◆ The official South Korean unit of currency is the won. US dollars are the easiest currency to exchange, however almost all major currencies can be exchanged in banks across the country.
- ◆ It is unnecessary to leave a tip for service in South Korea. A 10 per cent service charge is automatically added to bills in most hotels.

### *BUSINESS HOURS*

- ◆ Government offices are open between 9am and 6pm from Monday to Friday and until 1pm on Saturdays.
- ◆ Banks are open from 9.30am to 4.30pm on weekdays and until 1.30pm on Saturdays.
- ◆ Department stores are open seven days a week from about 10.30am until 7.30pm and most markets and shops keep longer hours.

### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Seoul's Kimp'o Airport is located approximately 18 kilometres from the city centre. Taxis are expensive and in short supply. Traffic jams are not uncommon. There are good airport buses which can be booked through hotels.

### *GENERAL*

- ◆ Always try to obtain an introduction to a Korean organisation or business executive rather than contacting them directly yourself. It is always useful to cultivate a network of Korean contacts for such introductions.
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- ◆ Try to exchange notes after every meeting to ensure that everything which was agreed upon is clearly understood. Often Korean business people's comprehension of English is not as sound as their courtesy would lead you to believe.
  - ◆ Korean negotiations tend to be lengthy and protracted. It is not advisable to appear pushy during a discussion. If a sensitive issue arises on which agreement is not forthcoming, leave it for discussion at a later meeting, preferably through a Korean intermediary.
  - ◆ Try to avoid lengthy, detailed contracts. In Korea, the human relationship which exists between the parties to a contract is more important than the legal document itself.
  - ◆ Relationships will often be developed after hours, at pubs and restaurants over copious quantities of food and alcohol. Such gatherings are usually seen as male-only affairs and are regarded as highly important by your Korean counterparts. Drinking competitions and complete drunkenness are not uncommon at such gatherings, but don't worry, things rarely get out of hand.
  - ◆ Be prepared to tell Koreans about your private life (ie. marital status, family background, income etc.). Korean people do not regard such questions as personal and will often appear extraordinarily interested in your background.
  - ◆ In Korea, it is important to endure tardiness with humility. Whether it's the traffic or just forgetfulness on the part of the individual, some Koreans are often late. It is probably best to tolerate such situations since to complain about tardiness may ultimately prove to be counter-productive to the negotiating process.
  - ◆ Be prepared for bureaucratic and red tape hassles in Korea. Such situations should be handled delicately and with a minimum of fuss.
  - ◆ Korea is a Confucian society based on respect for elders and the subservience of females. Unfortunately, it is therefore necessary for all foreigners to expect to encounter gender and age discrimination.
  - ◆ Never give four of anything as a gift in Korea. Four in Korean means death and is considered an unlucky number.
  - ◆ Never offer or give money to your counterpart or other Koreans in return for favours that have been provided out of kindness. Offering money is sometimes considered offensive.
  - ◆ Under no circumstances should you resort to scolding or yelling in Korea. The concept of "face" is just as important in Korea as it is in Japan or China. Try to be as diplomatic as you can in resolving conflict, no matter how infuriated you may feel.
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## **INDIA**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ Although Hindi is India's national language, almost all Indian officials, civil servants and business people have an excellent command of English.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ The climate in India can be very hot, so it is advisable to wear lightweight clothing to avoid discomfort.
- ◆ For business meetings, men and women should wear a lightweight or tropical suit. Men should wear a jacket and tie when making official calls or attending formal occasions.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ Always present a business card when introducing yourself.
- ◆ Refer to business contacts by their surname, rather than by their given name. In an Indian organisation, established hierarchies are to be respected. Indian employees address their superiors formally and, unless told otherwise, it is advisable to do the same. Men should be referred to as "Mr" and women as "Mrs" or "Miss", depending on their marital status.

### *BUSINESS HOURS*

- ◆ Government offices work a five-day week from Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.
- ◆ Department stores are usually open until around 7pm and small privately run shops and restaurants often keep longer hours.

### *MONEY*

- ◆ The official unit of currency in India is the rupee. The US dollar is widely accepted as an unofficial unit of currency and is the most easily exchanged foreign money in India.
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- ◆ Travellers' cheques (particularly those in US dollars) and foreign currencies can be easily exchanged at most banks around India. Always allow plenty of time for money exchanges, as the red tape involved in such transactions can be time-consuming.
- ◆ If venturing out into rural India, always change money before setting off, as foreign currency exchanges can be few and far between.

#### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ The quality of postal services in India can vary between efficient, as in most major cities, and lamentable, as in some small sub-regional centres.
- ◆ If staying in a large hotel, it is often less time-consuming to use the postal service provided by your hotel concierge desk. Large hotels usually offer phone/fax facilities at a reasonable cost.
- ◆ On the whole, telephone services in India are quite unreliable and it is advisable to use established connections such as those in large hotels and companies when making calls out of the country.

#### *GENERAL*

- ◆ The predominant religions in India are Hinduism and Islam and foreigners conducting business in India should ensure that they do not openly flout established religious conventions.
  - ◆ Hindus consider the cow to be a sacred animal and must never be offered beef products. It is important to remember that a large proportion of the Indian population is vegetarian. Always bear this in mind when conducting business over a meal.
  - ◆ When dealing with Muslims, avoid pork as it is not consumed by Muslims. Products made from pigskin are also considered unclean.
  - ◆ In India, the significance of a business arrangement is often determined by the amount of time spent during negotiations. Be prepared for a lengthy negotiating process and do not become frustrated by delays.
  - ◆ It is important to spend time establishing personal and social relationships with Indian business contacts, as such relationships are a vital prerequisite to conducting business.
  - ◆ Having a local partner in India is of great assistance when dealing with the government or officialdom.
  - ◆ It is inadvisable to expect punctuality in India. Do not schedule too many appointments in one day.
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- ◆ Always be prepared for lengthy delays when dealing with the government.
  - ◆ When negotiating with Indian people, never adopt a didactic position, as this will inspire resentment. Always maintain a low profile and avoid criticising Indian institutions. Most Indian business people are knowledgeable about western business practices and dislike foreigners telling them what to do.
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## **INDONESIA**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ The official language is Bahasa Indonesia, although many government officials and business people speak English.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ As in most Asian countries, business cards are very useful for making introductions. Never pass or receive cards with the left hand, as this hand is considered unclean.
- ◆ General forms of address in Indonesia are “Pak” for a man and “Ibu” for a woman.
- ◆ It is conventional to give a light bow of the head when shaking hands or taking one's leave.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ Indonesia has a very hot, tropical climate, so it is wise to always dress in light, cool clothing. Most of the time formal casual clothing is suitable.
- ◆ For business meetings, both men and women should wear a lightweight or tropical suit. Men should wear a jacket and tie when making official calls or attending formal occasions.
- ◆ Indonesia is an Islamic country so care should be taken care to avoid wearing revealing clothing.
- ◆ For certain formal occasions long-sleeved batik shirts are appropriate for men.

### *BUSINESS HOURS*

- ◆ Government offices are open between 7am and 3pm on weekdays and are closed on weekends.
  - ◆ Banks are open between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday, and until 1pm on Saturdays.
  - ◆ Post Offices are open between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, and until 1pm on Saturdays.
  - ◆ Department stores are open between 9am and 9pm Monday to Saturday.
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### *TRAFFIC*

- ◆ Although not as bad as that of Bangkok, Jakarta suffers from serious traffic problems and it is wise to avoid scheduling business appointments during rush hours. Plan no more than four appointments each day.

### *MONEY*

- ◆ The official unit of currency in Indonesia is the rupiah, which is divided into 100 sen.
- ◆ Credit cards are really only useful in large hotels, restaurants and foreign companies, so it is inadvisable to rely solely on plastic money in Indonesia. Travellers' cheques and foreign currency, particularly US dollars, can be easily exchanged at banks across the country. If you are travelling beyond large Indonesian centres, try to attend to your banking before you go, or carry a supply of cash for currency exchanges.

### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ The postal service in Indonesia is quite efficient, particularly from large centres such as Jakarta or Yogyakarta.
- ◆ International calls can be made from Wartel (Warung Telekomunikasi) offices across the country.

### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Jakarta's international airport is located about 35 kilometres from the city.
- ◆ Always allow at least one hour for the journey, which can take longer in heavy traffic.
- ◆ A taxi from the airport to the downtown area should cost around \$US12.

### *GIFTS*

- ◆ The most important thing to remember when selecting gifts for Indonesian people is that Indonesia is a Muslim country and therefore, alcohol and products made from pigskin are unsuitable.
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- ◆ In general, any foreign product which is either unavailable or prohibitively expensive in Indonesia would make a suitable gift.
- ◆ Items of popular US brand name clothing, preferably with the brand name prominently displayed across the front may be suitable for certain young people. Be particularly careful when selecting gifts for women, as items of clothing or cosmetics may not be suitable for practising Muslims.

### **GENERAL**

- ◆ Always take care to respect Muslim religious conventions. Although most Indonesians are Muslims, Indonesia is not an Islamic state and allows freedom of worship to all religions. Indonesia also contains large Hindu and Christian minorities.
  - ◆ Always avoid pork and alcohol, as these products are not consumed by Muslims.
  - ◆ Avoid lunch appointments during the holy Ramadan fasting month. This month is calculated according to the lunar calendar and varies from year to year.
  - ◆ Do not schedule meetings between 11am and 1pm on Fridays, as this is the time most Muslim people attend the mosque.
  - ◆ Never shake hands or pass or receive objects with the left hand, as this hand is considered unclean.
  - ◆ Never touch a person's head, or point with a forefinger, as this is considered impolite.
  - ◆ Give ample time when requesting an initial appointment with a company. An initial telephone call should be followed up in writing with a dossier of information on the requesting company and the purpose of the meeting.
  - ◆ Always avoid adopting a didactic position at meetings. It is better to take a low profile and whenever possible, let your host do the talking. Never be pushy or insistent.
  - ◆ The offering of complimentary presents is not advisable at the first encounter.
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## **THAILAND**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ In business circles some Thais will have a reasonable command of English, however most people do not feel comfortable speaking English.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ Thailand is a very hot, tropical country, so allowances are made in terms of clothing. However, as in most Asian countries, a person is often judged on their appearance and it always pays to dress well. A suit is preferred for formal meetings but a business shirt and tie for men, or dress or skirt and blouse for women, is appropriate for less formal situations.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ Address a Thai man or woman by their first name, not their surname, using the prefix “Khun” instead of Mr or Mrs. For example, former Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai should be referred to as Khun Chuan. It is not considered informal or familiar to call Thais by their first name.
- ◆ Thais normally greet Westerners with a handshake in business situations, however the traditional Thai greeting is a wai - a gesture where the hands are placed together at chest height and the head is bowed slightly.
- ◆ As in all Asian countries, business cards are useful when introducing yourself for the first time.

### *BUSINESS HOURS*

- ◆ Most government offices are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.
- ◆ Banks are open seven days a week from 8.30am until 3.30pm.
- ◆ Thai post offices are open from 8.30am until 4.30pm between Monday and Friday and open for two hours between 10am and 12pm on Saturdays.
- ◆ Department stores are usually closed on Sundays but open for the rest of the week between 10am and 7pm. Smaller shops usually keep longer hours and are often open seven days a week.

### *MONEY*

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- ◆ The official unit of currency in Thailand is the baht.
- ◆ Thailand has a modern, efficient banking system and most foreign currencies and travellers' cheques are easily exchanged at banks around the country.
- ◆ Credit cards can be used to obtain cash advances at banks and automatic teller machines and are widely accepted in large shops, restaurants and hotels.

#### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ Thailand has an efficient postal service and a modern telephone system. International calls can be made direct from IDD phones in most large cities and towns.
- ◆ In most cases, the central post office will be situated immediately adjacent to an IDD telephone facility. Most large hotels in Bangkok provide efficient business telecommunications services for guests and paying members of the public.

#### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Bangkok's international airport is located 25 kilometres from the city centre. Traffic along this route can be a nightmare during peak hours and it is advisable to allow at least one hour for the journey.
- ◆ Trains running directly to Hualomphong station can be caught from a station directly opposite the airport, however the most efficient way to travel into the city is by taxi.
- ◆ Be careful to avoid 'limousine taxi' touts who congregate inside the airport's arrival hall, as these people usually offer the same service as an ordinary Bangkok taxi at an inflated price.
- ◆ On the inside of the terminal near the doorway is the city taxi counter. This useful service dispenses with the need to pay drivers directly and ensures that drivers take the most direct route to your chosen destination. Simply tell the desk staff where you want to go, pay them and they will issue you with a voucher and allocate a driver. The driver collects the voucher and no more money need change hands.
- ◆ The trip between the airport and the downtown area should cost about \$US10.
- ◆ A car and driver can be arranged in advance through a hotel. Direct negotiation with limousine services can cut the hotel rate least half, if you pay by cash.

#### *TRAFFIC*

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- ◆ Bangkok's traffic is regarded as the worst in Asia and it can often take hours to get from one side of the city to the other. Space your appointments to allow for delays.
- ◆ If relying on taxis, always have your destination written in Thai, as most taxi drivers cannot speak English. In Bangkok, staff at hotel concierge desks are accustomed to providing this service.
- ◆ The best times for appointments are at mid-morning and early afternoon, when fewer people are on the roads.

### **GENERAL**

- ◆ Although Thai people appreciate punctuality when conducting business, deadlines are often overlooked and it is necessary to allow for this when scheduling meetings etc.
  - ◆ Never contradict or criticise anybody in public. Thais, like Chinese people, have a refined sense of public image and it is easy to cause someone to “lose face”. To complain that a Thai is late for an appointment may cause them to lose face and thereby disrupt the course of business.
  - ◆ Never joke about the monarchy. Thai people treat their monarchy with great reverence and the Royal family should never be insulted or criticised.
  - ◆ Buddhism is Thailand's national religion and priests must always receive a high level of respect. Women should never touch a monk or his robe. When handing an object to a monk, a woman should use an intermediary or place the object in a position where it can be retrieved by the monk.
  - ◆ Thai people regard the head as the most precious part of the body. Never touch a person (including children) on the head, or anywhere above the shoulders. In the same way, Thais regard the feet as the least sacred part of the body and it is considered offensive to point with the feet or even show the sole of the shoe or foot to another person. It is therefore necessary to take care when crossing your legs.
  - ◆ Never accept objects presented to you with your left hand as this is considered disrespectful.
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## **HONG KONG**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ Cantonese is the most commonly spoken language in Hong Kong. English is widely used in business.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ Suits for men and smart business outfits for women.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ Business cards, particularly cards printed in both English and Chinese are essential. As in most Asian countries, the distribution and receipt of business cards should be performed with both hands. Cards signify a person's status and should be studied carefully for a few seconds. Never place cards immediately into your pocket or wallet, as this may be interpreted as a sign of disrespect.
- ◆ When introduced to a person, it is customary to bow the head slightly. Always use the title of your business contacts. "Mr" or "Madam" are appropriate if you are uncertain of a person's official corporate title.
- ◆ Chinese surnames precede given names, hence a man named Lin Chee-hwa should be referred to as Mr Lin.

### *DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT*

- ◆ Business entertaining is widely used in Hong Kong and dining out is common during the negotiating process. Business contacts are usually taken to fine Chinese restaurants where huge multi-course banquets are served.
  - ◆ It is not uncommon for large quantities of alcohol such as brandy or cognac to be consumed throughout the meal. Foreign guests may be expected to participate in such drinking sessions.
  - ◆ Karaoke is a popular form of entertainment for Chinese people and foreigners may be encouraged to participate in "singalongs" after a meal.
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### *MONEY*

- ◆ Hong Kong is an international financial centre and all major currencies and travellers' cheques can be exchanged at almost any hour of the day or night.
- ◆ Most credit cards are accepted throughout the colony and can be used to obtain cash advances at banks and automatic teller machines.

### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ Hong Kong's post and telecommunications system is very efficient and reliable. Postal rates are cheap and post offices scattered far and wide across the colony.
- ◆ Local telephone calls are free and international direct dial calls can be made from IDD phones almost anywhere. IDD phone cards, which can be bought at convenience stores and newsagencies, are useful if making an international call from a phone box.

### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Hong Kong's Kai Tak International Airport is located in Kowloon, a short distance from the tourist centre of Tsimshatsui.
- ◆ Efficient airport shuttle buses leave from outside the arrival hall and serve Tsimshatsui, Wanchai, Central, Causeway Bay and Quarry Bay.
- ◆ These buses stop at most major hotels along their routes and include the Star Ferry and Macau Ferry terminals.
- ◆ Set-rate metered taxis also operate from a rank situated outside the terminal.

### *GENERAL*

- ◆ Women play a far greater role in business and civic affairs in Hong Kong than in countries such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan or China.
  - ◆ All aspects of a deal will be discussed at great length before the bargaining process begins. Business people in Hong Kong bargain enthusiastically but will honour deals once agreement is reached.
  - ◆ Hong Kong is an international city and most residents of Hong Kong are quite westernized and accustomed to dealing with foreigners.
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**BUSINESS HOURS**

	Weekdays	Saturdays
Offices	9am-5pm	9am-1pm
Banks	9am-4.30pm	9am-12.30pm
Post offices	8am-6pm	8am-6pm
Department stores	10am-6pm	10am-6pm

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## SINGAPORE

### LANGUAGE

- ◆ The official languages of Singapore are English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. Malay is considered the national language but English is the language used in public administration and working life.

### BUSINESS ATTIRE

- ◆ Standard business attire is quite formal but can be tailored to suit Singapore's hot, tropical climate. Men should wear a shirt and tie and women should wear a dress or skirt and blouse. Suits and coats should be worn to official functions.

### INTRODUCTIONS

- ◆ As in most Asian countries, business cards are essential for introductions. Cards should be given and received with both hands, particularly when dealing with Chinese people, and each card should be carefully studied for a few seconds. To place a business card immediately into your pocket may cause offence.
- ◆ Singaporean citizens of Chinese descent will usually have a three-syllable name. Chinese surnames precede given names. Hence, a man named Goh Tuck-seng should be referred to as Mr Goh.
- ◆ Malays and Indians have their given names before their father's name but are addressed by their given names. For example:

Malay Man : Mohamed bin Ibrahim  
 Address as : Encik (pronounced "enchee") Mohamed,  
 ie Mr Mohamed

Malay Woman : Hasnah binte Abdullah  
 Address as : Cik (pronounced "chik") Hasnah if the  
 woman is unmarried or Puan Hasnah for  
 married women

- ◆ Singaporean citizens of Indian descent frequently have long names. The name will often include the initials of the person's father, given in initials. For example:

Indian Person : Subramanian S.O. Manickavasagam  
 Address as : Mr Subramanian

- ◆ Most business people from Singapore also use English Christian names.
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### *MONEY*

- ◆ The official unit of currency in Singapore is the Singapore dollar.
- ◆ Singapore is an international financial centre and has a modern efficient banking system.
- ◆ Most foreign currencies and travellers' cheques can be easily exchanged in Singapore.
- ◆ Credit cards are widely accepted in Singapore and can be used to obtain cash advances at banks and at automatic teller machines across the island.

### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ Singapore has an efficient post and telecommunications service.
- ◆ The GPO is open 24 hours a day for essential transactions, as is the post office at Changi airport. International phone calls are easily made from Singapore. A telephone centre with international direct dial phone services is located at the GPO.

### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Singapore's Changi Airport is located 20 kilometres from the city centre and is well served by taxis and public buses. Taxis are considered to be the best in Asia with a trip to the city costing \$10-\$12.

### *GENERAL*

- ◆ Singapore has a population of approximately 2.7 million. The population is made up of 78 per cent Chinese, 14 per cent Malay, 7 per cent Indian and the remaining 1 per cent of the population is comprised of people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds.
  - ◆ Because Singapore is a multicultural Asian city, an awareness of the cultures of all Singaporeans must be maintained.
  - ◆ The main religions are Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Most Malays are Muslims and fast for one month during the Ramadan festival at the beginning of each Muslim year. Muslim people do not eat pork products and do not drink alcohol, so care must be taken when dining out with Muslims or selecting gifts. Pigskin products are also considered unclean.
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- ◆ Chinese people celebrate Chinese New Year according to the Lunar calendar, usually around late January or early February. Conducting business with Chinese people at this time can be inconvenient.

### ***BUSINESS HOURS***

- ◆ Government offices are usually open from Monday to Friday and on Saturday mornings. Offices usually open between 8am and 9am and close between 5pm and 6pm. On Saturdays, offices close between 11.30am and 1pm.
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## **THE PHILIPPINES**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ The official language of the Philippines is Tagalog, however almost all Filipino officials, civil servants and business people have an excellent command of English.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ The climate in the Philippines can be very hot so it is advisable to wear lightweight clothing to avoid discomfort.
- ◆ For business meetings, men and women should wear a lightweight or tropical suit. At the very least, men should wear a long-sleeved shirt and tie at initial meetings and a jacket and tie when making official calls or attending formal meetings.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ As in all Asian countries, it is customary to present business cards when making introductions.
- ◆ Filipinos are very sociable people and they like to shake hands when meeting business contacts.

### *BUSINESS HOURS*

- ◆ Offices, banks and public authorities work a five-day week. Banks are open between 9am and 3pm and most other offices work between 9am and 5pm.
- ◆ Large department stores are usually open until 7pm and smaller, privately-run shops often remain open until 10pm.

### *TRAFFIC*

- ◆ The traffic in Manila can be very heavy during rush hours and it is not advisable to schedule too many appointments at this time of the day. Although not quite as heavy as Bangkok, the traffic situation in Manila can seriously disrupt a tight business agenda and care must always be taken to allow for long delays when travelling from one side of the city to the other.

### *MONEY*

- ◆ The official unit of currency in the Philippines is the peso, which is divided into 100 centavos.
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- ◆ In the Philippines, it is best to carry US dollars and American Express travellers cheques, as these are the most easily converted foreign currency.
- ◆ In the Philippines, exchange rates vary depending on the size of the bill. Large denomination notes will receive a better rate than small bills.
- ◆ Most banks change money, although it is best to attend to all financial transactions in large cities or tourist areas before venturing out into rural areas.
- ◆ Manila is obviously the best place to change money in the Philippines. Often better rates can be obtained at private money changers such as those in the Ermita district of Manila.
- ◆ Credit cards are gaining acceptance in the Philippines and can be used to obtain cash advances at certain banks and automatic teller machines.

#### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ Postal services are reasonable in the Philippines, although items sent to overseas destinations can take two weeks or longer. Try to mail packages and important mail from Manila, as the postal service in that city has a better reputation than smaller regional centres.
- ◆ The telephone system in the Philippines is far from perfect and can be very frustrating.
- ◆ Most reputable hotels operate a business centre from which foreigners can make domestic and international calls and faxes.

#### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport is located about half an hour from Manila's downtown area.
  - ◆ A taxi into the centre of town should cost around \$US12.
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**GENERAL**

- ◆ The Philippines is a very westernized country and Filipinos are fascinated by American culture. American accents are more easily understood than those from the U.K., Australia or New Zealand.
  - ◆ Be prepared for lengthy delays when conducting business in the Philippines. Do not expect deadlines to be rigorously adhered to.
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## **JAPAN**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ Do not assume that all people you deal with in Japan will speak English. Most business people will have studied English at school or university, but many experience difficulty communicating in a language other than Japanese.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ It is important to always wear a business suit when conducting business in Japan.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ First impressions are very important in Japan and a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the way people conduct themselves at an initial meeting.
- ◆ Always carry a large supply of business cards. Bilingual business cards are useful, as many contacts will have only a rudimentary knowledge of English.
- ◆ Always distribute and receive business cards with both hands, as this is interpreted as a sign of respect.
- ◆ When distributing business cards, try not appear like a croupier dealing from a deck of playing cards. Hand each one over individually and devote your attention solely to the person receiving your card.
- ◆ When receiving cards, always use both hands and spend a few seconds holding the card in front of you so you can examine it carefully in the presence of the giver. Never place the card immediately into your pocket or wallet, as this would be gravely insulting to the person presenting you with their card. Perform this ritual individually for every card you receive, even if you are introduced to up to 20 people.
- ◆ Never write on a person's card in their presence, as this may cause offence.
- ◆ Japanese people will bend slightly at the waist when being introduced and it is considered polite to do the same.
- ◆ Japanese names list the surname before the given name in Japanese, however many Japanese people will adopt a Western usage and list their surname last when dealing with foreigners. It is important to ascertain which name is a Japanese person's surname and always refer to them by that name, eg. Miss Tanaka, Mr Hashimoto.

### *BUSINESS HOURS*

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- ◆ Most companies and government offices are open from 9am to 5pm, five days a week.
- ◆ Banks are open five days a week between 9am and 3pm.
- ◆ Shops are usually open every day of the week from around 10am, until as late as 8pm. Department stores tend to close slightly earlier at around 7pm.

### *MONEY*

- ◆ The official unit of currency in Japan is the yen. US dollars are the most easily exchanged currency in Japan, however most currencies and travellers' cheques are easily exchanged at banks across the country. Credit cards are also widely accepted.

### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ Japan has a modern, efficient post and telecommunications system and foreigners should encounter no difficulty sending mail or making international phone calls or faxes from Japan.

### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Tokyo's Narita airport is situated almost 70 kilometres from central Tokyo.
- ◆ Three rail services operate between the airport and the downtown area and take between 50 and 80 minutes, depending on whether you take a regular service or the more expensive express trains.
- ◆ Do not take a taxi to the city. This is a very expensive way to travel.
- ◆ If you have heavy bags, the various bus services are the best option.

### *GENERAL*

- ◆ Business is conducted formally in Japan, so it is necessary to respect the internal bureaucracy of the companies you deal with.
  - ◆ Never expect a junior member of an organisation to make an on-the-spot decision. Hierarchies must be respected and important decisions are usually made by senior executives.
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- ◆ Never insult or overrule a Japanese person in public, as this will cause them to lose face and may disrupt the negotiating process.
  - ◆ Networking is very important in Japan and a great deal of emphasis is placed upon establishing a business relationship before entering into a bargain.
  - ◆ Always provide prior written confirmation of a business meeting and confirm the results of the meeting by fax immediately after the meeting takes place.
  - ◆ Business in Japan is often conducted over a meal and commonly involves the consumption of copious quantities of alcohol. These occasions should be regarded as an important aspect of the negotiating process and should be attended whenever possible. Karaoke is also a popular form of social recreation in Japan and foreigners are often encouraged to participate.
  - ◆ Most decision-making is finalised before a meeting, so it is important to build and maintain a network of personal contacts.
  - ◆ Be prepared for Japanese people to ask questions concerning marital status, income and personal wealth, as these topics are not considered strictly personal between business associates.
  - ◆ Never address a Japanese business contact, particularly a person senior to you, by their first name. Always refer to or address a person by their surname.
  - ◆ When entering a Japanese home, always remove your shoes and wear the slippers which will be provided for your use.
  - ◆ Never eat food on the street or blow your nose in public, as both of these activities are considered rude.
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## **CAMBODIA**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ The official language spoken in Cambodia is Khmer. Many educated Cambodians over the age of 30 can converse in French. English is not widely understood.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ Cambodia is a hot, tropical country which does not lend itself to formal western business attire.
- ◆ The country experiences two monsoonal periods each year, from November to March and then from May to early October. In formal situations, a lightweight tropical suit is appropriate for both men and women. For less formal occasions, smart casual shirts and blouses with collars are sufficient.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ As in most Asian countries, the use of business cards is widespread.
  - ◆ Always distribute and receive business cards with both hands as a sign of respect to the person you are dealing with and always take a few seconds to study a person's card after it has been handed to you. This is particularly important when dealing with Cambodia's ethnic Chinese minority, many of whom hold influential positions in the country's business community.
  - ◆ Cambodian names can be confusing for foreigners. Surnames come first and given names come second. Hence, King Norodom Sihanouk's surname is Norodom, however he is referred to by his given name as King Sihanouk, in the same way that British people refer to their monarch as Queen Elizabeth.
  - ◆ Cambodians with short names, such as the country's co-Prime Minister, Hun Sen, are habitually referred to by both names.
  - ◆ When introduced to a Cambodian, refer to them by their surname prefixed by either "Mr", "Mrs" or "Madam" or simply use both their surname and given name until told otherwise.
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### *BUSINESS HOURS*

- ◆ Government offices are open from Monday to Saturday from 7.30am to 4.30pm with a break in the middle of the day.
- ◆ Privately-run businesses, particularly shops and restaurants, often keep longer hours.

### *MONEY*

- ◆ The official currency of Cambodia is the riel, which is divided into 100 sen.
- ◆ It is also advisable to carry a supply of US dollars when conducting business in Cambodia, as the country has a thriving black market.
- ◆ Travellers' cheques in US dollars can be cashed at banks in Phnom Penh. It is advisable to attend to all banking in the capital city before venturing out into regional Cambodia, as it is difficult to change anything other than cash in the countryside.
- ◆ Tipping is not widely practised in Cambodia but is naturally greatly appreciated.

### *SAFETY*

- ◆ When travelling out of Phnom Penh, always check with your hotel or embassy on whether you are travelling into an area which is still under government control. In recent years, foreigners have been killed when travelling into areas occupied by the Khmer Rouge.
- ◆ Certain regions of Cambodia are still covered with land mines and it is inadvisable to leave defined paths when conducting business in rural areas.

### *TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ The domestic telecommunications system is almost exclusively limited to government telephones.
  - ◆ An Australian telecoms company has established Cambodia's international telephone network, which can be accessed with multi-denominational telephone cards at various IDD telephones set up around Phnom Penh.
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*INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Cambodia's Pochentong International Airport is located seven kilometres to the west of Phnom Penh's downtown area.
- ◆ Taxi fares should be negotiated before leaving the terminal.

*GIFTS*

- ◆ When selecting gifts for Cambodians, choose western products which may be difficult to obtain in their country. As in many Asian countries, prestige label tobacco and alcohol products, in particular cognac, brandy and whisky are exceptionally popular. Designer label French perfume may be an appropriate gift for women.
- ◆ Full-bodied red wines are currently a fashionable drink in some countries in southeast Asia and may be appropriate in Cambodia.
- ◆ When selecting foreign tobacco products such as cigarettes, care should be taken to ensure that the products are manufactured in a country outside the region as these are considered to be of superior quality, particularly European or American-made cigarettes. Many foreign tobacco companies have factories operating in the region producing cigarettes which are widely available on the domestic market.
- ◆ Cigarettes manufactured outside the region have more value and 'novelty' appeal.

*GENERAL*

- ◆ Cambodia is a devoutly Buddhist country and it is important to show respect for the country's religion when conducting business there.
  - ◆ Never touch a person on the head as this is considered the most precious part of the body. In the same way, the feet are regarded as the least sacred part of the body and it is considered offensive to point with the feet or even show the sole of the shoe or foot to another person.
  - ◆ When entering a wat (pagoda), always remove hats and shoes.
  - ◆ Never point at a person or image of Buddha with your index finger or feet.
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## **LAOS**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ The official language spoken in Laos is Laotian or Lao. The four principle ethnic groups of the country speak varying dialects of this language, most of which are mutually intelligible.
- ◆ French, English, Russian and Chinese are spoken by some members of the population, although none can be considered widely understood. As a general rule, older Lao may speak some French and younger Lao may speak some English or Russian.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ Like other countries in Indochina, Laos has a subequatorial/tropical-monsoonal climate. Temperatures are high all year round and the wet season lasts from May to October. It is therefore preferable for both men and women to wear lightweight tropical suits when conducting business in Laos.
- ◆ For informal occasions a smart, casual shirt or blouse with a collar may suffice.
- ◆ Laos is a particularly conservative country and it is best to dress that way when in public.
- ◆ In late 1994 the government banned mobile telephones, mini-skirts and earrings on men as “counter-revolutionary” activities. Although the current status of this prohibition remains unknown, discretion in terms of attire and appearance is advisable.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ Always distribute and receive business cards with both hands as a sign of respect to the person you are dealing with.
  - ◆ When receiving another person's card, always study the card for a few seconds in their presence and never place it immediately into your pocket or wallet.
  - ◆ Lao names can be confusing for foreigners. Surnames come before given names, eg. Prime Minister Khamtay Siphandon would be referred to as Mr Khamtay or Prime Minister Khamtay.
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- ◆ The traditional Lao gesture of greeting is the “phanom” or “wai”, where the palms are placed together in a prayer-like gesture in front of the face or chest. Nowadays, however, the handshake is becoming increasingly common for both men and women, particularly during the conduct of business.

### ***BUSINESS HOURS***

- ◆ Government offices open at 8am, are closed for lunch between 11am and 2pm and generally close around 5pm. Private businesses and shops usually keep longer hours.

### ***MONEY***

- ◆ The official unit of currency is the kip, which is divided into 100 ath.
- ◆ It is advisable to also carry Thai baht and US dollars when conducting business in Laos, as both currencies are universally accepted in day-to-day commercial activities.
- ◆ Always carry cash if venturing outside the capital city of Vientiane, as it is difficult to change travellers' cheques in the countryside.
- ◆ Best rates are usually obtained by changing travellers' cheques at banks in Vientiane, rather than changing cash with a private money changer.

### ***SAFETY***

- ◆ On the whole, Laos is quite a safe country. If travelling outside Vientiane, always check with your hotel or embassy as anti-government rebels have been known to attack vehicles on rural roads in the past.

### ***TELECOMMUNICATIONS***

- ◆ Domestic telephone services in Laos are quite inefficient and erratic at the best of times.
  - ◆ International calls can only be made from Vientiane. IDD calls can be made from the International Telephone Office in Vientiane. The office is open 24 hours a day, but service can be unreliable during inclement weather.
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### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Vientiane's Wattay airport is located 10-15 minutes from the centre of town and it costs approximately \$US4 to make the journey in one of the taxis waiting in front of the terminal.

### *GIFTS*

- ◆ When selecting gifts for Lao people, choose western products which may be difficult to obtain in their country. As in many Asian countries, prestige label tobacco and alcohol products, in particular cognac, brandy and whisky are exceptionally popular. Designer label French perfume may be an appropriate gift for women.
- ◆ Full-bodied red wines are currently fashionable in some countries in southeast Asia and may be an appropriate gift in Laos.
- ◆ When selecting foreign tobacco products such as cigarettes, care should be taken to ensure that the products are manufactured in a country outside the region as these are considered to be of superior quality, particularly European or American-made cigarettes. Many foreign tobacco companies have factories operating in the region, producing cigarettes which are widely available on the domestic market. Cigarettes manufactured outside the region have more value and 'novelty' appeal.

### *GENERAL*

- ◆ Laos is a devoutly Buddhist country and it is important to respect the national religion when conducting business there.
  - ◆ Never touch a person on the head, as this is considered the most precious part of the body. In the same way, the feet are considered the least sacred part of the body and it is considered offensive to point with the feet or even show the sole of the shoe or foot to another person.
  - ◆ When entering a wat (pagoda), always remove hats and shoes.
  - ◆ Never point at a person or image of Buddha with the index finger or feet, as this is considered disrespectful.
  - ◆ Always treat monks with a high level of respect. Women should never touch a monk or his robe and when handing an object to a monk, should use an intermediary or place the object in a position where it is easily retrievable.
  - ◆ Objects should not be accepted with the left hand, as this is considered disrespectful.
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## **TAIWAN**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ The official language of Taiwan is Mandarin. All children study Mandarin at school but this is not necessarily the language spoken at home. The most widely spoken language in Taiwan is Taiwanese and it is not uncommon for older Taiwanese people to have difficulty speaking Mandarin.
- ◆ Taiwan was occupied by Japan until 1945 and Japanese is still spoken, particularly by older people.
- ◆ Although most people have studied English at school, it is not widely understood. Young, educated business people, however, usually have no difficulty communicating in English.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ A suit is the most appropriate attire for conducting business in Taiwan. In less formal situations, smart trousers and a shirt and tie for men, and a skirt and blouse for women may suffice.
- ◆ The important thing is to always present yourself well. Taiwanese people place a great deal of emphasis on appearance.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ First impressions are very important when dealing with Chinese people and a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the way a person conducts themselves at the first meeting.
  - ◆ The use of business cards is extremely important when conducting business in Taiwan. Always carry a large supply of cards and distribute them whenever possible. Bilingual cards, printed in both English and Chinese are very useful.
  - ◆ Always use both hands when receiving and distributing cards as this is interpreted as a sign of respect.
  - ◆ When handing out business cards it is important to give your attention solely to the person receiving your card. When distributing cards to several people, don't be tempted to rush like a croupier dealing playing cards at a casino.
  - ◆ When receiving cards, always study the card for several seconds. This shows how much importance you place on the status of the person who has given you their card.
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- ◆ Never write on the back of a person's card or place it immediately into your pocket or wallet, as this would cause the other person to lose face.
- ◆ Many Chinese business people use English first names when conducting business with foreigners. If you are uncertain how to address a Chinese person, simply refer to them by their surname prefixed with "Mr", "Mrs", or "Miss". Chinese names are usually three syllables long, with the surname preceding the given names. Hence Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui would be referred to as "President Lee" or "Mr Lee".

## *FACE*

- ◆ It is vital that all foreigners conducting business with Chinese people understand the importance of "face".
  - ◆ "Face" roughly equates to western concepts of status and respect. Chinese people regard the respect of their peers and colleagues as a matter of utmost importance. Conversely, to be humiliated or embarrassed in public is to be regarded with great shame.
  - ◆ Matters which foreigners may regard as funny may be a source of great humiliation to a Chinese person and it is therefore always necessary for foreigners to be conscious of the public image of the person they deal with. Face, in a nutshell, is merely a matter of good manners.
  - ◆ Difficult situations should always be handled delicately and without showing anger, no matter how frustrated you feel.
  - ◆ Never raise your voice, as this would cause the person you are angry with to lose face and break down the negotiating process. To shout at a Chinese person in public, correct them in front of their peers or raise your voice in public would cause them to lose face and ultimately will not advance your cause at all. Try to avoid situations which place a Chinese person on the spot.
  - ◆ One of the most common ways for a Chinese person to gain face is to spend vast sums of money on food and entertainment. Often this will be done to impress a foreign business associate or work colleagues. If you are taken out to dinner by Chinese people, always compliment your host on his/her choice of restaurant, the quality of food and entertainment, even if they personally criticise these things. This will give them face in the eyes of the other people at the table.
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### *GUANXI*

- ◆ “Guanxi” means connections. It is virtually impossible to conduct business in Taiwan without first establishing a network of connections.
- ◆ Chinese business is usually conducted on the basis of personal relationships which have been built up over time which are mutually beneficial to both parties. In many respects, these relationships are more binding than a legal contract and, Chinese deals are often arranged verbally without reducing anything to writing.
- ◆ Essentially, to have “guanxi” means to have a network of useful contacts bound by personal obligation to assist you. It also means you must assist these contacts if called upon.
- ◆ To have “guanxi” or a contact in an organisation, business or government department can open doors to foreigners conducting business in Taiwan or China.

### *FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT*

- ◆ Dining out is important in establishing guanxi. Chinese business negotiations are often conducted over a long banquet at which large quantities of alcohol are consumed.
- ◆ Karaoke is a popular form of entertainment for Chinese people and foreign business guests are often encouraged to participate.

### *BUSINESS HOURS*

- ◆ Business hours are from 8 or 8.30am until 5.30pm from Monday to Friday and from 8.30am until 12 noon on Saturdays. Most businesses close for lunch between 12 noon and 1.30pm.
  - ◆ Banks are open from 9am until 3.30pm from Monday to Friday and until midday on Saturdays.
  - ◆ Public holidays are scattered throughout the year, with the main holiday for Chinese New Year held on the first day of the first new moon of the year, usually around late January or early February. It is best to avoid trying to conduct business in Taiwan at this time of the year.
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### *MONEY*

- ◆ Taiwan has a modern banking system and it is not difficult to change most foreign currencies and travellers cheques in major cities. Advances on credit cards can also be obtained with a minimum of fuss.
- ◆ The official unit of currency in Taiwan is the New Taiwan dollar (NT\$).

### *POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ Taiwan has a modern postal system, with post offices operating between 8am and 5pm Monday to Saturday.
- ◆ Local telephone calls cost NT\$1 for three minutes. International calls can be made using coins or a telephone card (sold at convenience stores) at ISD phones all over the island.

### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Taipei's Chiang Kai-shek International Airport is located approximately one hour from Taipei, but the journey can take longer during rush hour. Limousine buses run from the terminal to downtown Taipei every 15 minutes and a taxi rank is located outside the arrival hall.

### *GIFTS*

- ◆ The most appropriate gifts for Chinese business associates are foreign luxury items such as French cognac, Scotch whisky and European cosmetics and perfumes. Most luxury Western goods are widely available in Taiwan but are prohibitively expensive.

### *GENERAL*

- ◆ Never write notes using red ink as this can imply that the writer will die soon.
  - ◆ When setting down chopsticks between courses, never place them in the rice bowl vertically or at an angle as this resembles sticks of incense burned at a funeral and is considered highly inauspicious. Always lie chopsticks horizontally across the rim of the bowl.
  - ◆ Chinese people are superstitious about the number four, which signifies death and should be avoided at all costs.
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- ◆ Avoid discussions which may cause embarrassment, such as death, divorce and politics.
  - ◆ Be prepared to answer personal questions relating to your age, marital status, income and family background.
  - ◆ Always show respect for elderly business associates, even those who no longer hold influential positions within the companies you are dealing with.
  - ◆ Chinese decision-making can take time, try not to aggressively push for a decision to be made on the spot.
  - ◆ Try to follow up all meetings with a letter and maintain contact with all clients and associates every few months. This will preserve your network of contacts and make business run more smoothly in the future.
  - ◆ The more Chinese-script written information you can provide your business contacts, the better. Often the people you deal with will be the ones who speak English, but this does not necessarily mean that they are the ones who make the decisions in the organisation. If you have written information for the decision-makers, this may make them feel more comfortable when dealing with your company.
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## **MYANMAR**

### *LANGUAGE*

- ◆ The official language of Myanmar is Burmese. However the country's geographic and ethnic diversity means that upwards of 100 indigenous languages are spoken throughout the country.
- ◆ Myanmar's recent history of British colonisation means that English is widely spoken and is taught to children from a young age.

### *BUSINESS ATTIRE*

- ◆ Myanmar's diverse geography, from the highlands of the Tibetan plateau in the north to the coastal plain on the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal in the south, means that the temperature can vary greatly throughout the country.
- ◆ On the whole, Myanmar enjoys a predominantly monsoon, equatorial climate on the coast and a humid temperate climate in the extreme north. For most of the year, lightweight tropical business suits are appropriate attire for men and women conducting business in Myanmar. Smart trousers and a shirt and tie for men, or a skirt and blouse for women may also suffice.
- ◆ Most Burmese men wear a traditional sarong referred to as a "longyi" with a western-style shirt. Women wear a similar outfit comprising a sarong with matching top. Most Burmese business people, however, will wear a western-style suit or shirt and tie when dealing with foreigners.
- ◆ During informal meetings you can wear a smart shirt or blouse with a collar as an alternative to a jacket and tie.

### *INTRODUCTIONS*

- ◆ The use of business cards is widespread in Myanmar and it is not uncommon for the owner of even the smallest tea-house or restaurant to present foreigners with his/her card.
  - ◆ Always distribute and receive cards with both hands as a sign of respect and always take a few seconds to read cards presented to you. Never place a card immediately into your pocket or wallet. This is particularly important when dealing with Myanmar's sizeable Chinese community, many of whom dominate the country's commercial environment, particularly in the north, around the regional centre of Mandalay.
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- ◆ Burmese names are unique in that they cannot be classified as given names or surnames. Burmese people are given one name, often two or three syllables long, which denotes neither marital status nor family connections. It is therefore possible, and in fact quite common, for Burmese siblings to have entirely different names. Similarly, women do not take their husband's name when they marry.
- ◆ When introduced to Burmese people, always refer to them by their full name, regardless of whether it is two or three syllables long. Never shorten a Burmese name as this is considered inappropriate.
- ◆ Burmese is a very polite language which contains around half a dozen honorific titles.
- ◆ The most commonly-used honorifics are U (as in U Nu) which means "Uncle" and is the approximate English equivalent of "Mr", and Daw (as in Daw Suu Kyi) which means "Aunt" and is the English equivalent of "Mrs", "Ms", or "Madam".

### **BUSINESS HOURS**

- ◆ Government offices in Myanmar are generally open from 8am to 11am and then from around 2pm to 5pm.
- ◆ Private businesses and shops usually keep longer hours.
- ◆ National holidays are held on the following days: January 4 (Independence Day), February 12 (Union Day), March 2 (Peasant's Day, anniversary of the 1962 coup), March 27 (Armed Forces Day), May 1 (Workers' Day), July 19 (Martyrs' Day) and December 3 (National Day).

### **MONEY**

- ◆ Changing money in Myanmar can be confusing for foreigners because the country has two currencies, one for Burmese people and one for foreigners.
  - ◆ Upon arrival in Myanmar, foreigners are required to change \$US300 (payable in cash, travellers cheques, British pounds or with a Visa credit card) into official Myanmar Foreign Exchange Certificates (FEC) at an artificially low rate. This is the currency used for official transactions such as paying hotel bills and so on.
  - ◆ The official currency of Myanmar, however, is the kyat (pronounced chyat), which is divided into 100 pyas. This is the currency used by Burmese people. The enormous difference in exchange rates between FEC and kyat means that it is financially inadvisable to use FEC for anything other than official transactions.
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- ◆ In order to save costs, most foreigners convert most of their FEC to kyat and use this currency for day-to-day transactions. Many Burmese businesses will gladly change FEC, US dollars and Thai baht into local currency.
- ◆ Try to resolve all financial transactions in large centres such as Yangon, Mandalay or Bago, as it may be difficult to change money in rural areas.
- ◆ As in most Southeast Asian countries, it is advisable to carry a small reserve supply of US dollars for use in emergencies.
- ◆ It is not customary to leave a tip when services are provided in Myanmar.

### *TELECOMMUNICATIONS*

- ◆ Most post and telecommunications services are quite unreliable in Myanmar.
- ◆ The best locations from which to make international phone calls are the capital city, Yangon and the regional centre of Mandalay in the north of the country.

### *INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT*

- ◆ Mingaladon Airport, the country's international airport, is located approximately 15 minutes from the centre of Yangon. A taxi queue can be found outside the airport, however it is not uncommon to be approached by drivers inside the terminal.
- ◆ The trip from the airport into the centre of town should cost approximately \$US6.

### *GIFTS*

- ◆ When selecting gifts for people in Myanmar, try to choose objects which are difficult to obtain in their country. Myanmar has a flourishing black market, and despite the popularity of prestige alcohol and tobacco products among Burmese people, particularly men, it is not difficult to obtain a wide variety of these products, at competitive prices within Myanmar itself.
  - ◆ Prestige label French cognacs and brandies and European cigarettes are particularly popular gifts for men.
  - ◆ Imported cosmetics such as lipstick and eye-shadow and fine perfumes may be suitable gifts for women.
  - ◆ For younger people, western brand-name apparel, preferably with the company logo displayed prominently across the chest may be suitable, but only if the item of clothing is made in a western country. Western clothing made in Asian countries is regarded as being of inferior quality.
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**GENERAL**

- ◆ Myanmar is a devoutly Buddhist country and it is important to always show respect for the national religion.
- ◆ Never touch a person on the head as this is considered the most precious part of the body. In the same way, the feet are considered the least sacred part of the body and it is considered offensive to point with the feet or even show the sole of the shoe or foot to another person.
- ◆ Always remove shoes, socks and sandals when entering a wat or pagoda.
- ◆ Never point at a person or image of Buddha with the index finger or feet, as this is considered disrespectful.
- ◆ Always treat monks with a high level of respect. Women should never touch a monk or his robe and when handing an object to a monk, should use an intermediary or place the object in a position where it is easily retrievable.
- ◆ When travelling around Myanmar, always confirm that it is permissible for foreigners to visit your intended destination. Myanmar is under martial law and is strictly controlled by SLORC, the military-dominated State Law and Order Restoration Council, which is highly sensitive about foreigners travelling beyond officially sanctioned travel routes.

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