

A Bespoke Programme Onboarding the Digital Nomads, “DE Rantau Programme” and the “Social Visit Pass” Catered for Foreign Professionals

At the forefront of digital revolutionisation Malaysia has launched the DE Rantau programme aimed specifically towards the digital nomad. The programme was launched on 1 October 2022 and all applications received will be screened by the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (“MDEC”)¹.

Tying the concepts of travel and work together, the DE Rantau Programme provides a platform for digital nomads which encompasses the digital freelancer, independent contractor and remote worker to secure access to exclusive benefits for nomad-ready living and working hubs, handpicked local services, discount vouchers, latest information and promotions. Additionally, it provides access to a full-fledged ecosystem which includes but is not limited to accommodation hubs, local services ranging from travel, tourism, transport, e-commerce, e-payments, and other services.

If successful, a foreign digital nomad will be issued a DE Rantau Nomad Pass which is a category of a Visit Pass specifically curated for the individual to travel and work in Peninsular Malaysia for up to 12 months with an option to renew for an additional 12 months. The principal applicant is permitted to bring in his spouse and children under the DE Rantau Programme².

To be eligible, the applicants must be at least 18 years old and are required to prove that they have active projects with a minimum three months of contracting period to qualify as a digital nomad under the foreign digital nomad category³. The minimum annual income of the applicant must be USD24,000 and above.

In an attempt to expand the nomad network within the country, local citizens can access the benefits and discounts offered under this Programme subject to the fulfilment of the specific conditions, *inter alia*, an annual income of RM36,000 and active projects with a minimum of a one month contracting period to qualify under the local digital nomad category. One of the unique features of the

Immigration Law Update

OCTOBER 2022

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Programme is the De Rantau Hub which has the following criteria:

- Shared or self-contained facility with bed, washroom, desk and chair for workspace, kitchen and pantry, listed on the accommodation hosting platform, cashless facility and security;
- Equipped with Wi-Fi or mobile internet at minimum 30Mbps;
- Strategically located in neighbourhoods with available cafés, stores, entertainment, recreation facilities, access to public transport and sharing economy and digital platform services;
- Induction programme, hosting of gatherings of nomad communities within the hubs⁴.

Aside from the DE Rantau Programme, the Immigration Department Director General, Datuk Seri Khairul Dzaimie Daud on 4 October 2022 announced that the Social Visit Pass (“PLS”) or PLS@XPATS is also available for foreign professionals who are urgently required to perform their critical tasks within the country for a maximum of 30 days⁵.

It is anticipated that the PLS would greatly benefit companies requiring foreign expertise for critical tasks such as machine maintenance, electrical installations, testing and commissioning. The list extends to cover sectors such as education, technology and communication, health and medical, commodity, security and defence, financial and banking, agriculture and farming, tourism, factory and manufacturing, services, wholesale and retail and petroleum and energy.

The introduction of DE Rantau and PLS@XPATS is a welcome alternative for foreign professionals who require a simplified and quick mechanism towards achieving the company’s business requirements in compliance with immigration laws in Malaysia.

Endnotes:

¹ <https://tinyurl.com/mw4jha6e>.

² <https://mdec.my/derantau/foreign/>.

³ <https://mdec.my/derantau/local/>.

⁴ <https://mdec.my/derantau/hub/>.

⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/2ssce3c4>.

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