

**Najib working on a national brand for Malaysia says Idris Jala**  
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**By Lee Wei Lian**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 27 — The prime minister has a team in place working full time on creating a national brand for Malaysia, said Datuk Seri Idris Jala today.

The Pemandu CEO said that the brand would involve Malaysian perspectives on national policy as well as the pattern of behaviour of Malaysians.

“If we can align these, then we can have a national brand,” said Jala, who is also a Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department, when replying to a question on the country’s branding at an accounting conference here.

Malaysia has a mixed reputation internationally with some saying that it is a model developing nation that managed to virtually eradicate hard core poverty while others say that it shot itself in the foot with questionable policies and administration dooming it to perpetual third-world status.

Unlike some countries which managed to cultivate strong positive brands — think Japan for electronics, refined cuisine and politeness, Switzerland for efficiency, beautiful scenery and watches or Canada which is famed for its tolerance and acceptance — Malaysia has no real immediately identifiable image.

Malaysia was also involved in spats with Singapore and Indonesia over cultural icons such as food and dance forms.

Canada was ranked the country with the best reputation in 2011 by the Reputation Institute in its annual study measuring the public perceptions of 50 countries around the world.

The study measured the overall trust, esteem, admiration and good feelings the public holds towards these countries, as well as their perceptions across 16 different attributes, including a good quality of life, a safe place to live and a strong attention to their environment.

Malaysia was not covered in the study.

Canada was followed by Sweden, Australia, Switzerland and New Zealand with their strong reputations are attributed to their steady democracies, high GDP per capita, focus on active lifestyles, well developed political systems and perceived neutrality to international political upheavals.

Japan was the highest ranked Asian country in 12th place, followed by Singapore (20) and Taiwan (25).

The lowest ranked countries in the 50-country study were Pakistan, Iran and Iraq, while the United States and China were ranked in the middle and lower tiers.

In the Reputation Institute's survey of most reputable cities, Kuala Lumpur ranked only 69th, even below 68th ranked Johannesburg which is widely known for its crime rates and barely above Shenzhen (71) and Dhaka (74).

The top three most reputable cities were London, Geneva and Sydney.

The cities were ranked in terms of the advancement of the economy, the level of appeal of the city environment and how effective were their administrations.

Malaysia's most famous landmark is its iconic Petronas twin towers and the Malaysian based company that is probably most widely known is AirAsia.

Despite the country's largely harmonious multi-racial and multi-religious make-up, the most sensational Malaysia centric headlines in foreign media have focused on religious controversies that could give the impression that the country was at risk of falling prey to fanaticism such as the caning of Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarno for drinking beer, the so called 'Allah row', the Obedient Wives Club and most recently — the canceled concert by Erykah Badu after a newspaper published a photo of her with the Arabic word for "Allah" tattooed on her upper body.

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