

Joint Media Release

Australian Furniture Assoc. joins forces with Connect Malaysia & Cultural Synergies to assist members capitalise on MOU benefits

Monday April 24, 2017. Australian Furniture Association (AFA) CEO Ms Patrizia Torelli, **Connect Malaysia** Principal Mr Joe Perri and **Cultural Synergies** Founder Dr Tom Verghese have announced an alliance to assist AFA members to capitalise on the recent MOU signing with the **Malaysian Furniture Council (MFC)**.



Commenting further, Ms Torelli said the signing of the MOU in Malaysia in March with the official representative body of Malaysian furniture industry represented a major milestone for the Australian Furniture Association. “We’re very proud of the partnership we have cemented with Malaysia on behalf of our members as we see this as an immense opportunity for the industries of both countries”.

“As the principal advocate of the Australian furniture and furnishings industry, we are constantly seeking opportunities to assist our members through strategic alliances, programs and services that will enhance their prospects for success in overseas marketplaces. Hence the alliance with Connect Malaysia and Cultural Synergies to capitalise on both the MOU and Malaysia Australia Free Trade Agreement (MAFTA) that came into effect in January 2013”.

Ms Torelli continued, “The alliance with Connect Malaysia and Cultural Synergies is off to a flying start with promotion of the ***Understanding Malaysian Culture for SMEs*** workshop on **Saturday May 6**. The workshop program has been developed and will be presented by Dr Verghese and will focus on providing practical information and advice on the various aspects of living and working in Malaysia, as well as conveying an understanding of the underlying elements that shape Malaysian culture inside and outside the workplace.

“The workshop program will comprise three core areas - Communication, Etiquette, and Organisational Hierarchy, and how to avoid misunderstandings with prospective business contacts and clients”

Malaysia has been a top ten trading partner for Australia over many years, with the country’s pro-business economy and MAFTA acting as a beacon attracting many entrepreneurs to venture north.

“Unfortunately for far too many Australian business owners, lack of understanding of local language, culture, customs and many other factors continue to scuttle prospects for success in overseas markets at the first P2P encounter,” said Dr Verghese. “This

need and desire to assist Australian SMEs was the motivation to develop the ***Understanding Malaysian Culture for SMEs*** workshop”.

Ms Torelli, Dr Verghese and Mr Perri confirmed that the AFA, Cultural Synergies and Connect Malaysia plan to follow the workshop with a long-term strategy and program of specialised roundtables, training courses and familiarisation/business matching initiatives.

The ***Understanding Malaysian Culture for SMEs*** workshop is also supported by **MATRADE**, Malaysia’s external trade agency. The **MATRADE** office at 432 St Kilda Road Melbourne will be the venue for the event.



MATRADE Director Ms Noor Hayati said, “We are very excited about the workshop initiative and especially pleased to support programs that bring Malaysian and Australian businesses and entrepreneurs together to develop mutually beneficial commercial relationships”.

“Malaysia is a smorgasbord of history and customs, each distinct in themselves but co-existing harmoniously, adjoining the Peninsular Malaysia to the states of Sabah and Sarawak on the Northern Part of Borneo. I am confident the workshop will give a clear understanding of Malaysia's diverse cultures and its importance for doing business successfully”.



Connect Malaysia was established in 2015 by Mr Perri as a boutique consultancy to assist Australian SMEs take advantage of commercial opportunities in Malaysia. Prior to commencing Connect Malaysia, Mr Perri was the president of the Australia Malaysia Business Council (AMBC) Victoria.

Mr Perri is also the principal of PR and marketing communications consultancy Joe Perri & Associates.



Malaysian-born Dr Tom Verghese, established **Cultural Synergies** in 1992 and is a leading authority in cultural intelligence, an internationally renowned expert, consultant author and main platform/workshop presenter on cross-cultural awareness.

Dr Verghese is also the author of the *‘The Invisible Elephant; Exploring Cultural Awareness’* and co-author of *‘Pillars of Growth: Strategies for Leading Your Organisation to Exponential Growth’*.

Issued jointly by: **Australian Furniture Association, Connect Malaysia & Cultural Synergies**

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Understanding Malaysian Culture for SMEs: A Workshop by Dr Tom Verghese

Malaysia is one of Australia's top ten trading partners and the prospects for business have provided a beacon for SMEs to expand their operations into Malaysia.

However, many ventures have been cut short by cross-cultural blunders in matters such as language, etiquette, non-verbal communication and indifference to local customs and norms.

Cultural slip-ups on the surface might appear trivial – even humorous by Aussie standards, but the mistakes made in areas such as management, marketing, advertising and during negotiations have had devastating financial consequences.



About workshop presenter Dr Tom Verghese

Dr Tom Verghese was born in Malaysia and is an internationally renowned expert, consultant, author and main platform/workshop presenter on cross-cultural awareness and Cultural Intelligence (CQ).

- Time:** 9:00am for prompt start 9:30am – 3:00pm, Saturday May 6, 2017
- Venue:** The office of MATRADE, Level 8, 432 St Kilda Road, Melbourne
- Cost:** \$240 per person includes Malaysian lunch and refreshment breaks

The **Understanding Malaysian Culture for SMEs** workshop will conclude with presentations from representatives from banking, government and business facilitation consultancies.

To confirm your attendance or enquiries, please visit www.culturalsynergies.com or contact Mr. Chris Lonergan at Cultural Synergies by email at enquiries@culturalsynergies.com or telephone 03 9909 7456

