
I. THE COUNTRY

The Republic of Singapore is a city-state situated at the tip of the Malay Peninsula. Consisting of the island of Singapore and approximately 54 smaller islands, the total area of Singapore is about 622 km² (240 square miles), slightly less than metropolitan Toronto. Linked with the Malay Peninsula to the north by a causeway across the Johore Straits, Singapore is close to the islands of Indonesia to the south and east, and is a hub of international air and sea traffic in Asia.

Singapore's central position in Southeast Asia is augmented by its natural harbour, making it the world's second busiest port. In addition, Singapore has become the world's third largest oil refining centre. As an important centre of banking, insurance, and commerce, it is a base for many international corporations.

History and Government

Singapore was founded in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles of the British East India Company to control the Far East shipping route and to serve as a way station for ships involved in British-China trade. In 1946, Singapore became a British Crown Colony. Achieving internal self government in 1959, it became a state of the newly independent Malay Federation in 1963. However, on August 9, 1965, Singapore seceded to become an independent republic within the Commonwealth.

Singapore is a parliamentary republic headed by a president and governed by a prime minister and Cabinet drawn from the 79-member unicameral legislature in which the People's Action Party (PAP) currently holds 77 seats. The PAP won power in 1959 and its leader, Lee Kuan Yew, has been prime minister since that time. The country follows a foreign policy of nonalignment and free trade. Singapore is also a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The People

Singapore's population is estimated at 2.6 million (1986). The country is a multiracial secular state with tolerance of all religions. The population is predominantly Chinese (77 per cent), with the other major