

BRUNEI IN THE ASEAN REGION:

Brunei Darussalam is a Muslim sultanate of 260,000 people. It covers an area of just 58,000 sq km and is located on the north coast of Borneo bordering the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. Forty per cent of the population are Malays, 30 percent are Chinese, 29 percent indigenous tribal groups and the remaining 1 percent are largely of Indian descent or are Westerners working on contract. Brunei's official name is Negara Brunei Darussalam, or more simply, Brunei.

In 1984, Brunei became independent after 96 years of British protection. Although Brunei was never actually colonized, the UK exerted its influence through a resident High Commissioner. In 1972, Brunei became self-governing, but the UK assumed responsibility for its defence and foreign affairs. No elections have been called since 1962, however; the Sultan rules the country with absolute executive power.

Although small both demographically and geographically, Brunei is considered one of the richest states in the world in terms of per capita income. Its wealth is directly attributable to its successful oil and gas industry. Brunei is the third largest oil producer in Southeast Asia after Indonesia and Malaysia, and is the world's second largest exporter of liquified natural gas (LNG).

Brunei has been a long-standing member of the Commonwealth. In 1984, Brunei became the sixth member of ASEAN and also became a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Brunei looks to ASEAN, however, as the cornerstone of its foreign policy to ensure territorial integrity and regional peace and security.

CANADA AND BRUNEI

Canada's relations with Brunei are limited but expanding steadily in sectors of mutual interest. Diplomatic relations between Canada and Brunei were established in early 1984 after Brunei assumed full responsibility for its foreign and defence affairs. Relations have since been pursued mainly through the Commonwealth and ASEAN ties. Canada's relations with Brunei matured considerably as a result of Brunei acting as Canada's dialogue partner within ASEAN during the period from 1988 to 1991. Discussions between the two countries have covered a range of international and multilateral concerns of mutual interest, such as Cambodia, Pacific Economic Co-operation and United Nations issues.