

Singapore :

Singapore, officially the **Republic of Singapore**, is a Southeast Asian city-state off the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, 137 kilometres (85 mi) north of the equator. An island country made up of 63 islands, it is separated from Malaysia by the Straits of Johor to its north and from Indonesia's Riau Islands by the Singapore Strait to its south. The country is highly urbanised with very little primary rainforest remaining, although more land is being created for development through land reclamation.

Part of various local empires since being inhabited in the 2nd century AD, Singapore hosted a trading post of the East India Company in 1819 with permission from the Sultanate of Johor. The British obtained sovereignty over the island in 1824 and Singapore became one of the British Straits Settlements in 1826. Occupied by the Japanese in World War II, Singapore declared independence, uniting with other former British territories to form Malaysia in 1963, although it was separated from Malaysia two years later. Since then it has had a massive increase in wealth, and is one of the Four Asian Tigers. Singapore is the world's fourth leading financial centre, and its port is one of the five busiest ports in the world. The economy depends heavily on exports and refining imported goods, especially in manufacturing, which constituted 26% of Singapore's GDP in 2005.

Singapore is a parliamentary republic with a Westminster system of unicameral parliamentary government. The People's Action Party has won every election since self-government in 1959, and governs on the basis of a strong state and prioritising collective welfare over individual rights such as freedom of assembly, an approach that has attracted criticism from organisations such as Freedom House.

Some 5 million people live in Singapore, of whom 2.91 million were born locally. Most are of Chinese, Malay or Indian descent. There are four official languages: English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. One of the five founding members of the Association of South East Asian Nations, Singapore also hosts the APEC Secretariat, and is a member of the East Asia Summit, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Commonwealth