

## INTRODUCTION

Singapore was founded in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles. To administer the colony, Sir Stamford Raffles had a small core of civilian officers – Singapore's first civil servants.

The Civil Service under the colonial government had a purely regulatory role with emphasis on maintaining law and order and on the collection of revenue. In 1959, Singapore became a self-governing state under the political leadership of the People's Action Party (PAP) led by Singapore's first Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. At the time, the Singapore Civil Service comprised nine ministries with a strength of 28,300 officers. There were also as many personnel in the five statutory boards then in existence. (A statutory board is an autonomous government agency established through an Act of Parliament to carry out the statutory objectives specified by law.) With self-government, the Civil Service expanded its role beyond law and order to nation-building and socio-economic development. As a result, more statutory boards and ministries were required, and more civil servants were needed to shoulder the increased responsibilities.

In 1963, Singapore became a state within Malaysia with internal security, police, customs, defence and foreign affairs under the central federal government. This again changed the character of the Civil Service. On 9 August, 1965 Singapore left Malaysia to be an independent country. It was a traumatic experience, but the people rose to the occasion.

### History at Independence

1959	Internal Self-Government  PAP forms government and has been in power since (which means a long period of continuity, stability and consistency in government policy)
1963	Merger with Federation of Malaya, Sabah & Sarawak to form Malaysia
1965	Singapore left Malaysia
1967	Britain gives notice of military pull-out as part of its total programme of withdrawal east of Suez and completes military withdrawal

As a small, multi-racial and multi-religious society without natural resources, Singapore was particularly vulnerable. Its survival was compounded by the quick withdrawal of British armed forces from Singapore, which affected its security and economy.

Survival, security and the achievement of economic goals required hard work and the government and civil servants rolled up their sleeves to begin transforming Singapore. The government lost no time in building up its defence capability with the help of friendly nations.

The need for racial and religious tolerance is so obvious as not to bear mention. But firm action is necessary. To achieve social harmony and internal stability, the majority race has to provide room for the minority races to progress and succeed. Every child learns two languages in school: English and his mother tongue. English is the language of business, administration and technology.

The cultural make up of the people is inscribed in a kind of national ethos???. These characteristics are by no means immutable, particularly given Singapore's large exposure to western influence and the international media because of the facility of much of the population to speak English. The attributes have to be continually worked at and reinforced by way of public policy and the process of government.

### **Demographics**

Total **population** 3 million

78% Chinese

14% Malay

7% Indian

1% Others

### **Religion**

54% Buddhist or Taoist

15% Muslim

13% Christian

4% Hindu

14% Others or no religion

### **Official Languages**

Malay

Chinese (Mandarin)

Indian (Tamil)

English

### **Cultural Make-Up**

- Nation before Community and Society before Self
- Family as the Basic Unit of Society
- Community Support and Respect for the Individual
- Consensus, not conflict, in community and national decision-making
- Racial and Religious Harmony
- Strong Regard and Respect for Education

Law and order; resilience; social discipline; strong political and administrative leadership; an emphasis on institution-building; housing; education; economic development and employment; and a good industrial and business climate, among other things, have become the underpinnings of the Singapore system. The rule of law is applied assiduously, with the political and administrative leadership setting high personal standards.

Law and order and regulation was a colonial preoccupation. Post-colonial phenomena include administrative reforms of different hues, from reforming salaries to dealing with nepotism and corruption, and from new economic strategies to quality management approaches.

When the PAP Government took power in 1959, its first major task was to reform the Civil Service. Other reforms followed in the 39 years of PAP Government. The reforms typically:

- reframed Civil Service structure, procedures and service conditions for a more effective bureaucracy;
- provided support to organisations dealing with matters of great importance(check) – the economic development and national development of Singapore; and
- shaped the behaviour of civil servants and other public servants from a colonial "we-are-masters" mentality to a "serve-the-people" mentality.

The process is still continuing.

From a strength of 28,300 officers in 1959, the Civil Service grew to a peak of 72,000 in 1979. The point of departure occurred in 1980 when the number of Civil Service posts started to decline as a result of planned change. The present Civil Service strength is about 62,000. The basis for the planned change was natural attrition, the freezing of vacant posts, and stringent control over the creation of new posts.

Today, although Singapore has travelled the road to a better standard of living and enhanced social discipline, it remains vulnerable to regional, global and internal conditions. The need for national resilience, social discipline and strong political and administrative leadership very much remains. Singapore remains small in size with no natural resources. To understand Singapore is to understand its continuous need to manage its survival, economic well-being and security. It asks that it be allowed to shape its own destiny, with its own will and vision, and it hopes that others, usually much larger than Singapore, will not impose their mental models on it.