

Michael D. Barr

# SINGAPORE

A Modern History



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# Contents

<i>List of Maps</i>	x
<i>List of Figures</i>	xi
<i>Foreword by Carl A. Trocki</i>	xiii
<i>Prologue</i>	xix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xxii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xxiv
<i>Glossary of Asian-Language Terms</i>	xxvi
<i>Timeline</i>	xxvii
1. Let's Talk About 1819: Reorienting the National Narrative	I
2. The Idea of Singapore	12
3. Singapore Central: The Role of Location in Singapore's History	33
4. Governance in Premodern Singapore	64
5. Governance in Modern Singapore, 1867–1965	87
6. Governance in Independent Singapore	119
7. The Economy: Singapore, Still at the Centre	141
8. Making Modern Singaporeans: People, Society and Place	172
Afterword	202
<i>Notes</i>	204
<i>Bibliography</i>	229
<i>Index</i>	250

# List of Maps

1.1	<i>Plan of the Town of Singapore</i> by Lieutenant Jackson, 1828 Survey Department Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore	xxxviii
3.1	Submarine cables and nodes, c.2015 Source: TeleGeography, <a href="http://www.telegeography.com">http://www.telegeography.com</a>	34
3.2	Straits of Malacca	36
3.3	Global shipping of crude oil and petroleum products, 2013 Source: Maritime Executive, 'World Oil Transit Chokepoints', <a href="https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/world-oil-transit-chokepoints-2014-11-15#gs.j2fa2_w">https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/world-oil-transit-chokepoints-2014-11-15#gs.j2fa2_w</a>	37
3.4	Major ports in the Straits of Malacca	38
3.5	Singapore, Karimun and Bintan	43
3.6	Straits of Malacca, showing Singapore in relation to historical centres of power	49
3.7	Dragon Tooth's Strait/Gate after twentieth-century land reclamation	50
3.8	Five strategic nodes secured by the Dutch in the 1630s	57
4.1	Straits of Malacca, eighteenth century	70
4.2	The Temenggong's domain, by land and sea c.1818–23 Source: Carl A. Trocki, <i>Prince of Pirates</i> , p. 60	72
4.3	British Malaya, 1824	76
5.1	Malay states and Singapore	93

Maps 3.1, 3.2, 3.4–3.8, 4.1–4.3 and 5.1 were created by Michael Barr using base cartography sourced from d-maps.com

# List of Figures

1.1	Secondary One History textbook, 1984–99 Photograph taken and owned by Michael Barr	5
1.2	Secondary One History textbook, 2014– Photograph taken and owned by Michael Barr	9
3.1	Top 20 container ports, 2016 Created by Michael Barr. Source: World Shipping Council, ‘Top 50 World Container Ports’, <a href="http://www.worldshipping.org/about-the-industry/global-trade/top-50-world-container-ports">http://www.worldshipping.org/about-the-industry/global-trade/top-50-world-container-ports</a>	38
3.2	Top container ports by region, 2016 Created by Michael Barr. Source: World Shipping Council, ‘Top 50 World Container Ports’, <a href="http://www.worldshipping.org/about-the-industry/global-trade/top-50-world-container-ports">http://www.worldshipping.org/about-the-industry/global-trade/top-50-world-container-ports</a>	39
3.3	Top 10 markets for Changi Airport, 2015 Source: Changi Airport Media Centre, <a href="http://www.changiairport.com/corporate/media-centre/newsroom.html#/images/changi2015-top-10-country-markets-516931">http://www.changiairport.com/corporate/media-centre/newsroom.html#/images/changi2015-top-10-country-markets-516931</a>	40
3.4	Two contemporary views across Dragon Tooth’s Strait Photographs taken and owned by Michael Barr	50
4.1	Temenggong Daing Ibrahim Kwa Chong Guan Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore	82
5.1	A full-size reconstruction of part of the ‘Death Railway’ in Thailand – the bridge over the River Kwai Photograph taken by and owned by Michael Barr	98
5.2	Kampung Baru Nilai, an old ‘New Village’ in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia Photograph taken and owned by Michael Barr	105
5.3	A young Lee Kuan Yew, shown on a poster hanging in the Singapore National Museum, June 2015 Photograph taken and owned by Michael Barr	107
5.4	Lim Chin Siong, 1950s Ministry of Information and the Arts, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore	113
6.1	Lee Kuan Yew in the 1970s, shown on a poster hanging in the Singapore National Museum, June 2015 Photograph taken and owned by Michael Barr	121

SINGAPORE

6.2	Dr Goh Keng Swee, 1967 Courtesy of the National Archives of Australia, A1501, A7080/8	130
6.3	Housing and Development Board living Photograph taken and owned by Michael Barr	133
6.4	Goh Chok Tong, 1990s Photograph placed in public domain by the US Department of Defence. Photo by VIRIN: 119598-E-YYG91-773.jpg	137
6.5	Lee Hsien Loong, 2007 Photograph placed in public domain by the US Department of Defence. Photo by VIRIN: 741715-A-RHP97-993.jpg	139
7.1	Pulau Bukom, 2015: view from the southern shore of Sentosa Photograph taken and owned by Michael Barr	151
7.2	Foreign investment in Singapore manufacturing, 1970–5 Chart created by Michael Barr. Source: Garry Rodan, <i>The Political Economy of Singapore's Industrialization</i> , Table 4.5, p. 122.	157
7.3	Cranes for containers, Port of Singapore Photographs taken and owned by Michael Barr	158
7.4	From zinc and atap to high-rise: Singapore in the 1960s Quek Tiong Swee Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore	160
7.5	Land extensions for work, rest and play Photographs taken and owned by Michael Barr	166
7.6	Real estate sales brochure selling 'North Singapore' Photograph taken and owned by Michael Barr	170
8.1	Ship to shore: lighters and lightermen at Pasir Panjang, 1993 Courtesy of Stephen Dobbs	178
8.2	Meeting in the marketplace: a plural society in a port city, 1910s Lim Kheng Chye Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore	183
8.3	Indian road builders in the nineteenth century Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore	184
8.4	Table reproduced from the 1947 social survey of the city of Singapore Source: Department of Social Welfare, Singapore, <i>A Social Survey of Singapore</i> , p. 52, Table XVI	189
8.5	Malays in a <i>kampung</i> , c.1911 Arshak C. Galstaun Collection, courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore	191
8.6	David Marshall, 1950s Ministry of Information and the Arts, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore	197

# Foreword

CARL A. TROCKI

**T**he Australian scholar, Michael Barr, has written extensively on contemporary Singapore politics and its political economy. Over the past two decades he has published works on the thought of Lee Kuan Yew, on the political economy of Singapore Inc., on Asian values and on the social impact of Singapore's educational system, among other things. In all of this he has pioneered looking behind the curtains of mythology and self-congratulation that have become hallmarks of the 'story' of Singapore's success, as told by its elite class. With this book, Barr makes an important contribution to the literature on Singapore's history and sets a new standard for scholarly treatment of the state.

While I have never thought of him as an outspoken critic of the regime, his work has provided considerable evidence that the self-portrait of Mr Lee and his government is not always what they would wish us to believe. At the same time he has not been slow to recognise the legitimate and considerable accomplishments of the city-state. In some cases he argues that these might be more impressive than those for which People's Action Party (PAP) claims credit. The current work offers a number of examples of this view.

Although much of his recent work has been in contemporary political study, this book revisits his original discipline, which is history. Speaking as a historian myself, I find this cross-over of history and contemporary politics both gratifying and extraordinary. Rarely do students of politics do more than provide a cursory and stereotypical view of the historical developments that have shaped their subjects. I hasten to add that Barr himself is not usually guilty of this blind spot but, even allowing for that, he has approached Singapore's past in a unique manner. Although six of the eight substantive chapters deal mainly with the years before 1965, the entire book is truly grounded in the issues and problems of the twenty-first century. Rather than a standard chronological approach, Barr has opted for what I see as a thematic approach, or perhaps a problem-based approach.

The main 'problem' as Barr sees it, is 'The Singapore Story'. This is the title of Lee Kuan Yew's historical autobiography – himself and Singapore – as if the two could



not be separated. In this sense, Barr's book is frankly in the category of 'revisionist' history. It is important to understand that 'history' in Singapore has a rather interesting history. At first, when Singapore became independent under the rule of Lee and his PAP, the government felt there was little need for history. In their eyes, as of 1965, the world was made anew. The British colonial past was little more than a period in which many Chinese had come to settle on the island. Singapore had been born out of a series of crises beginning with the Japanese Occupation, the communist 'threat' and the experience as part of Malaysia. In any case, the past was now irrelevant. These three 'crises' had been overcome by the wise leadership of the PAP and Lee Kuan Yew and there was no need to probe further. In Singapore's schools and in the public discourse of the 1960s and 1970s, there was virtually no history beyond this.

By the 1980s, the government's view on the uselessness of history had changed. A new generation had arisen which had not known the strife of the past and it was deemed necessary to inform them about the history of those who had built this new Singapore. Thus we see the origins of the Singapore Story. This was a tale of great men, such as Thomas Stamford Raffles who had founded this dynamic port city where only a sleepy Malay fishing village had formerly existed in 1819. It had been populated by rags-to-riches Chinese immigrants supplying tin, rubber and pepper to Britain and the world. Mary Turnbull had written the history of British Singapore. Then came a series of crises: the Japanese Occupation, the communist threat and the unhappy experience with Malaysia. Singapore faced a grim economic future and was surrounded by danger on all sides. Luckily, Singapore had been steered through these recent difficulties by the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew. Today, Singapore lives with this 'mythology', as Loh Kah Seng has described it.

Barr begins his attempt to redress this somewhat lopsided version of the past by looking at three 'problems' that force us to readjust our thinking about Singapore. These include Singapore's 'place', secondly its 'size' and thirdly, whether it is a city or a nation. In discussing place, Barr begins with a circumstance of which few would be aware. He offers us a map showing Singapore as a major node of the global undersea cable network. These cables carry about 95% of the world's electronic communications. His map shows that Singapore is on a level with London, New York, San Francisco and Tokyo in terms of importance. Perhaps this centrality could be explained by the fact that gutta-percha, the substance that was initially used to coat those marine cables, was a product of the Johor rainforests and was 'discovered' in Singapore and exported to the world from Singapore. It is also important to remember that the network was created in the nineteenth century, and except for the fibre-optic cables that now make up the bulk of the network, it remains an example of nineteenth-century technology. But, there is more to Singapore's position than this.

In terms of global shipping, it is likewise important as a major node between the Indian and Pacific oceans at the entrance to the Straits of Malacca. This centrality is nothing new, but has been the case since the mid-nineteenth century. Today, Singapore is also a global node of airline traffic, a financial centre, a petroleum centre and, of course, a shopping centre. Moreover, recent archaeological evidence has shown that Singapore had been the site of a prominent entrepôt on the Indian Ocean–South China Sea trade routes perhaps as early as the twelfth century. On the other hand, this centrality was not inevitable.

In 1819, Raffles' choice of Singapore as a British port was actually quite arbitrary. Barr argues that Raffles chose the site largely because it was *available* at the time. In fact, he and William Farquhar had originally hoped to found a settlement at nearby Riau, on Bentan Island, but the Dutch had managed to pre-empt their scheme. They then turned to Karimun, but finally settled on Singapore because the Malay prince, the Temenggong Abdul Rahman, had set up a residence there. The Temenggong, who possessed the island by hereditary right, offered a slight cover of legitimacy to Raffles' claim. For the Temenggong, Raffles offered the chance to make Singapore an important node of Asian commerce. Also, in this story, it is important to acknowledge the role of Farquhar who had the on-the-ground knowledge to lead Raffles to Singapore Island.

Singapore, despite its excellent harbour, was not necessarily destined to be the great port of the Straits. Although Singapore had flourished in the fourteenth century and again in the sixteenth, in other times, other sites had been equally significant, including Malacca, Riau, Johor, Palembang, Aceh and Kedah. Barr's argument clearly undercuts a number of key myths of Singapore's history. The first is the wisdom and foresight attributed to Raffles and the importance of the 1819 date. As I have suggested earlier in my own work, the whole period between 1795 and 1824, when the Napoleonic Wars shook the world, was transitional. In the eighteenth century both Holland and France were considerable counter-weights to British power. Britain's position in Asia (and Singapore's especially) was not secured until well after Waterloo. Barr places the narrative of Raffles' 'foundation' of Singapore squarely as a minor consequence of this shift in hegemonic power rather than as part of a grand design. Finally, as Barr makes clear, for most of the nineteenth century, Singapore remained an 'Asian' port, or an Indian Ocean port. It was one more reincarnation in the succession of multicultural entrepôts that have made up what John Miksic has styled the 'silk road of the sea' for nearly two millennia. The East India Company gained nothing from the possession, even though its merchants prospered.

On the other hand, Barr also makes clear that while Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP did much to overhaul and renovate Singapore's economy after 1965, it was not really a case of 'Third World to First' as the myth boasts. The British and European contribution

to Singapore's economic situation became crucial in the late nineteenth century and maintained its importance through the early twentieth century. Such factors as the development of steam travel, the railroad, the modernisation of Singapore's port facilities, its shipbuilding industry, its place in the oil industry, the trans-oceanic cable network and even Singapore's early industrialisation and its public housing programme were all elements that were already in place before 1959.

Although Singapore was in a rather insecure position in 1965 when it left Malaysia, the crisis was never so great as pretended. The possible loss of the Malaysian hinterland and a possible threat from Indonesia were matters for concern. But perhaps the anticipated reactions from Britain and Australia to Singapore's independence were seen by Singapore's leaders as more significant threats.

The real contributions of Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP were, however, considerable. They included the decision to containerise the port in 1969 and the creation of an alliance with American and Japanese capital to power Singapore's industrialisation. The policy pushed by Goh Keng Swee to finance Singapore's housing and urban development with the Central Provident Fund was a key element in Singapore's success. So too was the creation of the financial and management structures which included a carefully balanced partnership between business and government that has developed into 'Singapore Inc.'. Likewise, one might consider the creation of a 'leadership class' and a system for self-renewal and perpetuation of the family-based political economy as one of Lee Kuan Yew's unique contributions. Barr notes that experts on state capitalism '[regard] Singapore Inc. as being the most efficient form of state capitalism in the world'. Barr's focus on Singapore's 'place' in the global economic network and the ability of Lee and his associates to parley that situation in the late twentieth century are really the key elements in the city-state's success.

The creation of social stability as well as the quiescence of the labour force has also been an important accomplishment of Singapore's ruling elite. Barr warns, however, that the long-term success of this system now that its architects have passed on is an open question. So too, is the fact that much of this quiescence was achieved by sidelining local capital and most of Singapore's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These were not only economic entities, but also had considerable cultural and social power that Lee Kuan Yew saw as a threat to his own prominence.

In terms of size, Barr correctly reflects again on the history of Singapore as an important centre of the Malay world. Singapore has always been more than merely an island full of Chinese. The pre-nineteenth-century entrepôts that flourished in and around Singapore were always Malay centres. Singapore was always part of the islands to the south and the west and the peninsula to the north. Johor, Riau-Lingga and eastern Sumatra had been a joint maritime zone since the earliest times. It remained so

in the nineteenth century as I have shown in my discussion of the pepper and gambier agriculture and the revenue farming systems of the era, despite the European attempts to divide the area into British and Dutch spheres. This local coherence has been resurrected since the 1980s with the development of Singapore–Johor–Riau (SIJORI) growth triangle.

Yet in the years between World War II and 1980, the geographic consciousness of official Singapore was really quite blinded to this reality. Particularly, in the 1960s and 1970s, one felt particularly isolated in Singapore. The sense of being on an island, surrounded by ‘enemies’, was pervasive. Of course, this was not true of the tens of thousands of Singaporeans and Malaysians who commuted daily across the Causeway. To the government, this often seemed like an unwelcome anomaly. Thanks to official foot-dragging on both sides, this border crossing remains one of the more tedious commutes I know of.

Even though it was long the case that newspapers were confiscated when one crossed the Causeway, the governments and peoples of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia always retained many links. Inhabitants of Riau and Johor constantly watched Singapore television and listened to Singapore radio. People moved constantly across these borders, and now money, technology and expertise likewise flow along their ‘natural’ and historic patterns. This ambiguity of Singapore’s sense of its size is part of the uncertainty surrounding the issues of Singapore’s identity as a city-state or a nation-state.

Much of Singapore’s continued success will probably depend on the development of Singapore’s society and culture. This is where the question of Singapore’s identity comes in, and we can see the relevance of Barr’s query about whether Singapore is a city or a nation. As a city, Singapore aspires to be ‘world class’, a global city – one that is open and welcomes all with talent, one that is cosmopolitan, affluent, competitive and dynamic – but it also presents itself as a nation-state. It must protect its borders, serve the needs of its citizens and promote the ‘national interest’. There are many contradictions in attempting to pursue these two paths. One cannot be a neo-liberal and a nationalist at the same time forever. At some point, the ‘heartlanders’ will find it compelling to reject the cosmopolitan agenda. Can its self-perpetuating elite continue to rule in its arbitrary and sometimes arrogant fashion and still pretend that they rule by democratic consensus? Can a city-state be a nation-state?

Related to this is the question of Singapore’s idea of multiculturalism. Can the nation-state continue to coexist with the CMIO (Chinese, Malays, Indians and ‘Others’) consciousness that pervades the entire system? Particularly when ethnic Chinese constitute such an important element of the population? Barr has shown that the system from education to military service has been quietly rigged to promote Chinese over the other races. Part of the reluctance to acknowledge Singapore’s history as well as its place

in Southeast Asia stems from the consciousness that such awareness would require an acknowledgement of the important role of the Malay peoples in Singapore.

This attention to place, size and city- or nation-state identifies many of the important, but often unacknowledged, issues that lie beneath the surface of Singapore. Barr gives us what we may justly see as a much more balanced picture of Singapore's past than we have from the Singapore Story. He has done a thorough survey of much of the recent scholarship on Singapore and its history and has produced a readable and engaging work that analyses and unpacks the current mythologies. He also shows us that Singapore's actual history has some of the real depth that the mythologies ignore. He likewise provides us with some of the tools that make it possible to understand key issues that Singapore will face in the future. In structuring his study around these three issues, he completely deflates the Singapore Story, and in the process reveals its fundamental emptiness.

# Prologue

**A**t the outset of writing a history of Singapore, it is humbling to realise that I am able to present the basic outline in four paragraphs:

1. Singapore is a largish island (currently just over 700 square kilometres) at the mouth of Malaysia's Johor River. It was formerly part of the Johor-Riau Sultanate and home to traders and pirates who maximised the benefits to be gained from its strategic location across the Straits of Malacca. In 1819 it became a British trading port-cum-colony and a free port welcoming all traders and taxing none, thanks to the initiative of the colony's founder, Sir Stamford Raffles. Chinese flocked in as labourers and entrepreneurs, along with natives from the region (mostly from places that today are parts of Malaysia and Indonesia).
2. As part of the British Straits Settlements (comprising Singapore, Malacca and Penang) Singapore was administered from Calcutta from 1826 until 1867, and then directly by the Colonial Office in London until the Japanese Occupation in 1942. After the war the Colonial Office disestablished the Straits Settlements and Singapore became a Crown Colony while Malacca and Penang were integrated more fully into British Malaya. The British granted the new Federation of Malaya independence in 1957 but retained Singapore as a colony until it joined with Malaya and Britain's North Borneo colonies (Sarawak and Sabah) in 1963 to form the new Federation of Malaysia.
3. The integration of Singapore into Malaysia ended in bitter recrimination after only 18 tumultuous months, and the Republic of Singapore was born in 1965 despite no one wanting its creation – not the British, nor the government in Kuala Lumpur and not even the ruling elite in Singapore itself.
4. Having had independence thrust upon it, the Singapore Government set about making it a success by integrating the new country into the global capitalist order. Over the half-century since independence its government has milked to the full the advantages provided by the island's British heritage and connections

(capitalism, a strong administration, the inheritance of tangible assets, the use of English) while dispensing with inconvenient legacies such as civil liberties and full democracy. The young republic has emerged as a well-ordered and professionally run bastion of state capitalism.

At less than 400 words, this thumbnail sketch even outperforms Wikipedia for brevity. For any reader who knows Singapore as little more than that place with the nice airport, it might even be a useful point of orientation. But it is hardly an adequate description; nor is it free of value judgements. Just to take two points: the description of Singapore as an island at the mouth of the Johor River, and the choice of the pre-colonial Johor-Riau Sultanate as a starting point. The absence of any mention of Singapore's second 'founding father', Lee Kuan Yew, and its post-independence ruling party, the People's Action Party (PAP), will also raise some eyebrows, as will the failure to mention the country's two primary foundation myths – the operation of meritocracy and multiculturalism (which in Singapore is known as 'multiracialism').



I have kept this little exercise in subjective brevity separate from the main text because it really is an affront to the notion of writing a national history to presume to condense it thus, and yet I have retained it as a Prologue precisely because it hints at some of the enigmas and challenges of writing a national history.

Benedict Anderson<sup>1</sup> assures us that any national history is a constructed entity, with a starting point, stories of change, shifting emphases and even potential futures that are selected by national myth-makers: variously aristocrats and royalty, religious and political leaders, scholars and journalists, novelists and poets, and sometimes even educational bureaucrats. These disparate people may collude with each other in making such selections, but they are just as likely to be operating in competition with each other or feeding off each other or their long-dead ancestors without any sense of collusion. The narrative they weave between them is in some form a truly 'national' story in the sense that it is representative of a dominant national self-image. In another sense it is just the self-representation of the winners in the society and so national histories change as the locus of power shifts within the society, or as the fortunes of the nation itself wax and wane. Furthermore there can be competing national narratives, each playing to a different domestic constituency.

That such traps lie in wait even for the author of a 400-word national history of a very small and young country like Singapore emphasises the contingent nature of the picture presented in the pages of this book.

## PROLOGUE

Singapore's national history is a battleground between rival visions of the country. Unlike the case with larger, older countries, the practical parameters of this battleground are highly restrictive, but the very smallness, closeness and newness of the field makes it a highly volatile one. Members of the current national elite consider (and want) the national narrative to be more or less settled as it now stands because it concludes with the presumption of their continued rule and the country's continued prosperity. They might have their way but I do not see my role as helping this along. If I have a mission, it is to pull the national narrative apart and see how it can be put together differently. With this goal in mind, I have written a revisionist national history that devotes a great deal of attention to an interrogation of the narratives and myths that comprise the national history – and the very role of national history in national identity and national politics. I even question whether the 'national' perspective is the most appropriate way to study Singapore's history and include a chapter that interrogates the presumptive 'idea' of Singapore.

Yet for all my questioning of the national perspective, I open the book writing about Singapore's 'national' achievements and close with thoughts about its 'national future'. It really is difficult to escape this perspective when writing about a city-state in the early twenty-first century. Perhaps my underlying nation-based perspective is a reflection of my personal methodological bias, which I admit gravitates towards elite politics, but I think it also says something about the hegemonic place of the 'nation-state' in our understandings of the location of power in the modern international system – where both imperial states like China and city-states like Singapore have to be fitted neatly into an international system of 'nation-states'. In this book I have certainly made a major effort to break free of the rigidity of the national prism. I leave it to readers to judge how fully I have succeeded.



# Acknowledgements

This book has been in gestation since 2012 while I was still working on *The Ruling Elite of Singapore*, and has been a serious work in progress since 2014. In that time I have accumulated numerous debts of gratitude that have contributed to the finished product.

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*MDB, Adelaide, July 2018*

# List of Abbreviations

ABL	Anti-British League
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BMA	British Military Administration
CEO	chief executive officer
CPF	Central Provident Fund
CPM	Communist Party of Malaya (a variation of MCP, Malayan Communist Party)
DBS	Development Bank of Singapore (now known as DBS Bank)
EDB	Economic Development Board
EIC	[English] East India Company
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDP	gross domestic product
GIC	Government of Singapore Investment Corporation
GLC	government-linked company
KMM	Young Malay Union (Kaum Melayu Muda) (Malay)
KMT	Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) (Mandarin)
MCA	Malayan/Malaysian Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party (sometimes called the CPM, Communist Party of Malaya)
MIC	Malayan/Malaysian Indian Congress
MP	Member of Parliament
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MRT	Mass Rapid Transit (train system)
NIDL	New International Division of Labour
OFDI	outward foreign direct investment
PAP	People's Action Party

# Timeline

## PREMODERN SINGAPORE

### Before the Seventeenth Century

- 1025 Indian (Chola) attacks begin the decline of the Srivajaya Empire, which had been based at Palembang on the north-east coast of Sumatra
- 1126 Song dynasty opens up China and encourages maritime trade to the south; new period of prosperity in Southeast Asia
- 1290 Beginning of Singapore's first period of prosperity
- 1325 Temasik (Singapore) sends a tributary mission to China
- 1340s Singapore attacked by Siamese forces
- 1349 Wang Dayuan writes of Dragon Tooth's Gate/Old Singapore Strait (between Sentosa and Singapore Island) as the gateway between oceans
- 1390 Sang Nila Utama flees Javanese attacks on Palembang and invades Singapore; changes its name from Temasik to Singapura and settles there with his followers
- 1396 Sang Nila Utama leaves Singapore for Malacca with most of his followers; founds Malacca Sultanate; end of Singapore's first period of prosperity
- 1436 Ming dynasty bans Chinese participation in maritime trade
- 1511 Portuguese sack Malacca; Sultanate returns to Riau/Johor area and continues as the Johor Sultanate; beginning of Singapore's second period of prosperity
- 1570s Portuguese consider building a fortress on or near Singapore
- 1580s New Singapore Strait (south of Sentosa) starts being used for maritime passage and the Old Singapore Strait starts falling out of use
- 1594 Jacques de Coultre reports a significant settlement on Singapore

### The Seventeenth Century

- 1600 Formation of the Honourable [English] East India Company (EIC)
- 1602 Formation of Dutch East India Company (VOC)
- 1603 Dutch establish first settlement in Java; Dutch and Portuguese fight a naval battle off Singapore
- 1606 Dutch Admiral Cornelius Matelieff de Jonge reports the presence of a harbour master at Singapore; negotiates treaty of alliance with Sultan of Johor
- 1630s Dutch identify five strategic points of control around Johor, Singapore and Malacca
- 1641 Dutch capture Malacca from Portuguese; Sultan Iskander Thani of Aceh dies, ending a century of Acehnese attacks on Johor
- 1669 EIC establishes a factory in Kedah (which survives only four or five years)
- 1699 Murder of Sultan Mahmud Syah of Johor; effectively the end of the Johor Sultanate; gradual depopulation of Singapore and Johor; the end of Singapore's second period of prosperity

### The Eighteenth Century

- 1703 Sultan Abdul Jalil offers Singapore to the British (but they decline)
- 1718 Raja Kecil of Siak (Sumatra) captures Johor, claiming to be the heir of Sultan Mahmud Syah
- 1724 Raja Kecil defeated and returns to build his kingdom in Siak; the final end of Johor Sultanate
- 1720s Bugis begin filling the vacuum left by fall of Johor Sultanate; establish themselves in Riau as a Riau Sultanate; begin opening the waters and harbours of Riau to the British
- 1756 Riau engages in open warfare with the Dutch
- 1782 Governor General of (British) India begins seeking a base in the Straits of Malacca in response to a military setback by French forces in the Bay of Bengal
- 1784 Riau attacks the Dutch in Malacca; the Dutch repel the attack and take Riau, signing a treaty with Sultan Mahmud
- 1784 Dutch cede free navigation of the Far East seas to Britain
- 1786 British accept sovereignty of Penang from Sultan of Kedah; establish a colony

## TIMELINE

- 1787 Sultan Mahmud attacks the Dutch on Riau with the help of mercenaries; the Dutch retaliate successfully but Riau is razed and destroyed as a regional centre, leaving settlement of Chinese gambier and pepper farmers to work the island
- 1795 Sultan Mahmud returns to Riau under a new treaty with the Dutch
- 1799 The end of the VOC; the Dutch state takes over its colonies

### 1801–1867

- 1811 Temenggong Abdul Rahman begins settling thousands of his followers on Singapore; establishes a large settlement at Kampong Glam and begins enticing Chinese gambier and pepper farmers from Riau; British invade and occupy Dutch Java as part of the politics of the Napoleonic Wars; Sir Stamford Raffles installed as Lieutenant Governor of Java
- 1812 Death of Sultan Mahmud; succeeded by his younger son, Sultan Abdul Rahman, overlooking his elder son, Hussain/Hussein Mahummud Shah; Temenggong Abdul Rahman aligns himself with Hussein
- 1814 The British return Java to the Dutch at the end of the Napoleonic Wars
- 1817 Raffles appointed Lieutenant Governor of Bencoolen, on the south-west coast of Sumatra
- 1818 The Dutch arrive in Riau, and sign a treaty with Sultan Abdul Rahman, thus recognising his claim to the throne and re-establishing their sovereignty over Riau; Temenggong Abdul Rahman relocates to Singapore, making it his main base; the Governor General of India dispatches Raffles to Penang with the mission of establishing a base at the southern end of the Straits of Malacca
- 1819 Raffles and Colonel William Farquhar arrive in Singapore; Raffles and Temenggong Abdul Rahman sign an interim treaty to establish an EIC factory; a week later the Temenggong, 'Sultan' Hussain and Raffles sign a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. These treaties confirm the Temenggong as the 'Ruler of Singapore' and Hussain as 'Sultan of Johore'; together they are confirmed as comprising 'the Government of Singapore-Johore', and the EIC is recognised as a tenant with rights in the river district. Raffles returns to Bencoolen with authority over the Singapore settlement; Farquhar appointed Resident of Singapore.
- 1822 A colonial town planning committee plans the segregation of Singapore town on racial lines

## SINGAPORE

- 1823 Sultan Hussain, Temenggong Abdul Rahman and Raffles sign a new treaty, giving Britain sovereignty over all of Singapore except for the Sultan's and Temenggong's personal compounds; Sir John Crawfurd replaces Farquhar as Resident of Singapore; Raffles retires; Singapore becomes an Indian Presidency, administered from Calcutta
- 1824 Signing of the Treaty of London, which legitimises the British claim to Singapore and the Temenggong's claim to Johor, but gives his southern island holdings to the Dutch; Malacca is given to the British – Singapore's third period of prosperity has now unambiguously begun; publication of Singapore's first local newspaper, the English-language *Singapore Chronicle*
- 1825 Death of Temenggong Abdul Rahman; succeeded by his 15-year-old son, Daing Ibrahim
- 1826 Singapore, Penang and Malacca are formed into a single Indian Presidency called the Straits Settlements owned by the EIC and administered from Calcutta
- 1829 Beginnings of Singapore's shipping industry
- 1830s Seat of government of the Straits Settlements begins shifting from Penang to Singapore
- 1830 Straits Settlements downgraded from a Presidency to a Residency
- 1833 Renewal of EIC Charter; the EIC loses its monopoly of the China trade
- 1834 Singapore Free School, which subsequently became Singapore Institution (forerunner of the Raffles Institution) opens as Singapore's first school, teaching in English and initially in Malay, Mandarin and Tamil
- 1835 Sultan Hussain dies in poverty and without any successor; Governor Samuel Bonham begins building up Daing Ibrahim's stature and importance as a means of controlling piracy
- 1837 Building of Singapore Free School completed
- 1840s Secret society violence in Singapore on the rise; Singapore's inland roads programme begins
- 1841 Daing Ibrahim officially installed as Temenggong, having notionally held the title since 1825
- 1842 End of the First Opium War with the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing
- 1843 Discovery of gutta-percha in Johor
- 1844 Temenggong Daing Ibrahim begins developing Johor through gambier and pepper farms

## TIMELINE

- 1845 Beginning of the age of steam ships
- 1850s Singapore emerges as a major coaling station; Christian missionary societies begin opening schools in Singapore
- 1851 Opening of the Horsburgh Lighthouse on Pedra Branca
- 1852 Opening of New Harbour (Keppel Harbour)
- 1853 Americans force 'free trade' on Japan
- 1855 British force 'free trade' on Siam
- 1856 Judiciary shifts from Penang to Singapore, finally ending the last vestige of Penang's role as the seat of government and administration
- 1857 Indian Mutiny
- 1858 EIC is dissolved; the Colonial Office assumes control of the Straits Settlements, though it still administers them through Calcutta; the seat of Johor's government and administration is transferred from Singapore to Johor Baru
- 1860 End of the Second Opium War
- 1862 Death of Temenggong Daing Ibrahim; succeeded as Temenggong by his son, Abu Bakar
- 1864 Beginning of development of New Harbour (Keppel Harbour) by Tanjong Pagar Dock Company
- 1866 Temenggong Abu Bakar given title 'Maharaja' by the British and adds Muar to his territory

## MODERN SINGAPORE BEFORE INDEPENDENCE, 1867–1965

- 1867 Colonial Office in London takes direct control of the Straits Settlements; creation of a Straits Civil Service; a nominated, advisory Legislative Council formed
- 1868 Tanjong Pagar Dock Company opens Singapore's first dry dock
- 1869 Opening of Suez Canal
- 1871 Opening of the first submarine cable between Singapore and London
- 1876 Publication of first Malay newspaper, *Jawi Peranakan*
- 1870s Tin and rubber replace gambier and pepper as Malaya's main exports; British hold over central-western Malay peninsula tightens, with Abu Bakar's assistance



## SINGAPORE

- 1947 Foundation of the Progressive Party
- 1948 Declaration of the 'Malayan Emergency'; MCP declared illegal; a partially elected Legislative Council instituted in Singapore
- 1949 CCP victory in China
- 1950 Dismantling of the MCP's Singapore Town Committee; 'Maria Hertogh Riots'
- 1950–3 Korean War
- 1954 Foundation of the People's Action Party (PAP); 'National Service Riot'
- 1955 Introduction of limited self-government with an elected Legislative Assembly; foundation of the Labour Front; David Marshall appointed Chief Minister, heading a coalition led by the Labour Front; 'Hock Lee Riot'; creation of the Central Provident Fund
- 1956 'Middle School Riots'; abortive negotiations in London over self-government; opening of Nanyang University; Lim Yew Hock appointed Chief Minister heading an ever-changing coalition; Lim Yew Hock begins programme of detentions
- 1957 Successful negotiations in London for self-government; foundation of Workers' Party by David Marshall; PAP wins inaugural City Council elections; foundation of the Federation of Malaya
- 1958 Nanyang University opens; Lee Kuan Yew enters a united front with the MCP
- 1959 Singapore granted almost complete self-government; PAP wins Legislative Assembly elections; Lee Kuan Yew appointed Prime Minister
- 1960 Foundation of the Housing and Development Board; announcement of plans for Jurong Industrial Estate
- 1961 Bukit Ho Swee fire; two PAP by-election losses; Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister of Malaya, declares support for merger between Singapore and Malaya; splits in PAP; foundation of Barisan Sosialis (Socialist Front) and the United People's Party; foundation of the Economic Development Board (EDB); formation of National Trades Union Congress (NTUC)
- 1962 Mobil approaches EDB about expansion; plebiscite on 'Merger' with Malaya; the beginning of Indonesian Konfrontasi
- 1963 Operation Coldstore; PAP wins general election, Barisan forms opposition; formation of Malaysia, including Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah; beginning of Konfrontasi

## TIMELINE

- 1964 'Singapore Race Riots'  
1965 Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee and E.W. Barker negotiate Singapore's exit from Malaysia

### INDEPENDENT SINGAPORE, 1965–

- 1965 Foundation of the Republic of Singapore with Lee Kuan Yew as Prime Minister, heading a PAP government; the last Singapore Legislative Assembly becomes the first Singapore Parliament; first American troops deployed in Vietnam
- 1966 Mobil opens Singapore's first oil refinery at Jurong; in Indonesia Sukarno falls, Suharto rises; end of Indonesia's Konfrontasi
- 1967 UK devalues the pound sterling
- 1968 PAP wins every seat in parliament; foundation of the Development Bank of Singapore (DBS); decision taken to turn Singapore into a financial centre; UK announces early closure of naval base; foundation of Sembawang Shipyards Pty Ltd, forerunner of Sembcorp; Lee Kuan Yew begins his sabbatical at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
- 1969 'Malaysian Race Riots'; Nixon announces the Guam Doctrine, partially withdrawing from Asia; Lee Hsien Loong passes matriculation in Catholic High School; decision taken to containerise the Port of Singapore
- 1970s Traditional Chinese schools wither and are all but extinguished
- 1970 First junior college, National Junior College, opens; Lee Hsien Loong passes matriculation at National Junior College
- 1971 Nixon defaults on US commitment to the gold standard; Singapore Armed Forces Overseas Scholarship announced, with Lee Hsien Loong a first-round winner
- 1972 Port of Singapore is containerised
- 1974 Formation of Sheng-li Holdings (later Singapore Technologies and ST Engineering) and Temasek Holdings; scholarship scheme for serving Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) officers instituted, with Lee Hsien Loong in first round of winners
- 1975 End of Vietnam War
- 1978 Singapore's 'Second Industrial Revolution'; Deng Xiaoping visits Singapore; Lee Hsien Loong enrolls in US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth

# Index

- Abdul Jalil, Sultan [57](#). *See also* Johor
- Abdul Rahman, Sultan of Riau Lingga [43](#), [72](#). *See also* Hussain Mahumud Shah; Raffles Landing, 1819
- Abdul Rahman, Temenggong [1](#), [4](#), [43](#), [46](#), 72–6, 78–9, 81–4, [142](#), 174–5, 176. *See also* Raffles Landing, 1819
- Abu Bakar, Temenggong [32](#), 93–4. *See also* Johor; Daing Ibrahim, Temenggong; Temenggong
- Adam, John [45](#)
- Administrative Service [131](#)
- Alexander the Great, Iskander Shah [66](#)
- All-Party Committee on Chinese Education [112](#), 198. *See also* Marshall, David; education; multiracialism
- Alliance Party [102](#). *See also* political parties
- Anson, Edward 92–3
- Anti-British League (ABL) [106](#), [108](#). *See also* Malayan Communist Party
- Asiatic Petroleum Company. *See* Royal Dutch Shell
- assimilation 198–9. *See also* Chinese Singaporean; education; ethnic/racial identity; Indian Singaporean; language; multiracialism; Muslim communities
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) [126](#), 167–8. *See also* China; South China Sea
- Australia [35](#), [41](#), [61](#), 108–9, 118, 127, 151–2, 185
- Bannerman, John 44–5
- Barisan Sosialis [23](#), [114](#), [116](#). *See also* political parties
- Black, Robert [111](#)
- Bonham, Samuel 81–2
- Borschberg, Peter [7](#), [8](#), 51–2, [69](#), [141](#), 143  
Shahbandar, Sri Raja Negara, Harbour Master [69](#). *See also* Johor; Sakidar Shah, Queen, *orang laut*
- British Empire [48](#), [55](#), 65–6, 75–6, [108](#), 122  
‘divide and conquer’ strategy [85](#)
- British Malaya 27–8, 59–60, 75–6, [92](#), [95](#), [100](#), [148](#)  
Federated Malay States [27](#), [94](#)  
Unfederated Malay States [27](#), [94](#)  
*See also* Straits Settlements
- British Military Administration (BMA) [194](#)
- Bugis [42](#), [55](#), [70](#), [82](#), [89](#), 142–3, 174, 180. *See also* Indonesia, Bintan
- Bukit Ho Swee 114–15
- Calcutta [27](#), 29–30, [43](#), [56](#), [79](#). *See also* Governor General of India; Transfer Movement, 1867
- Catholic Church [4](#), [21](#), [23](#), [136](#), 180, 181, [186](#)
- Central Provident Fund (CPF) [155](#)
- Chan Heng Chee [23](#), 121, 128  
‘administrative state’ 122, 129  
*Politics of Survival, The* [23](#), 122, 128
- Changi Airport 40–1, [167](#), 174
- Chettiar [90](#). *See also* Tāmilis
- Chew, Melanie 117
- Chew, Phyllis 180
- Chiam See Tong [134](#)
- Chin, C.C. [23](#), [106](#). *See also* Malayan Communist Party
- Chin Peng [103](#), [107](#). *See also* Malayan Communist Party
- China [25](#), [26](#), [37](#), [38](#), 47–8, [67](#), [125](#)  
China–Singapore relationship 125–6  
Chinese Communist Party [109](#), [196](#)  
Cultural Revolution [48](#)  
Great Famine [48](#)  
Great Leap Forward [48](#)  
Ming dynasty, court [53](#), [67](#)  
One Belt, One Road [62](#)  
South China Sea [47](#), [71](#), 125–6, [147](#)
- Chinatown 87–90, [104](#), [114](#), [138](#), 159, 172–3, 180, 188

- Chinese High School 190. *See also* education, Chinese schools
- Chinese Nationalist Revolution 19, 20, 195
- Chinese Singaporean 29, 78, 81–5, 109–10, 176, 179, 194, 195
- Chinese associations 194
- Chinese Catholic Mission 180
- Chinese Chamber of Commerce 96, 194
- Chinese rickshaw 176
- conservatives versus leftists 194–5
- coolie 88
- guanxi* 81
- immigrants 144, 176, 181, 187–8
- kangchu* system 83–4, 143. *See also* tax (revenue) farms
- Kapitan China 81, 83, 143, 145
- kongsi* 81, 83–4, 88, 142–5, 147, 175, 181
- peranakan/baba* 88, 181–2, 188
- secret societies and triad gangs 31, 81, 84, 88–9, 94, 103
- Straits Chinese 110, 181, 187
- towkay* 78, 84, 88, 89, 145, 181, 194–5
- trade unions 196
- Christian missions and mission schools 180, 186, 187, 193. *See also* education, English schools
- city-state 1–3, 7, 12, 17–18, 36, 60–1, 170
- Clementi, Cecil 95
- Clive of India 29
- Cold Storage company 185
- Cold War 109–10, 121–2, 125
- communist, threat of labelling 6, 8, 20, 22–3, 28–9, 64, 96, 101–2, 105–6, 108–10, 112, 115–17, 136, 194–5
- Crawford, John 43, 76–7, 85–6
- Critchley, Tom 118
- Daing Ibrahim, Temenggong 31–2, 65, 81–2, 93–4, 147–8. *See also* Abdul Rahman, Temenggong
- de Albuquerque, Alfonso 54. *See also* Portugal
- detention 6, 8, 22–4, 108–9, 112–14, 116, 118, 129, 136
- Malayan Emergency, 1948–60 102, 105, 108–9
- Operation Coldstore, 1963 8, 22, 23, 108–9, 114, 117, 128, 135
- Operation Spectrum, 1987 8, 24, 136
- Development Bank of Singapore (DBS) 155, 159
- Dhanabalan, S. 159
- Dobbs, Stephen 175
- domestic vulnerability 20–3
- Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) 75, 142–3, 152
- East Asia 37, 39, 40, 125, 141, 167
- East India Company 4, 29, 56, 58, 71, 74, 79–80, 142–3, 145, 146
- Economic Development Board (EDB) 152, 155–6, 167
- education 3, 64, 112, 126, 131, 186–7, 192–9
- Chinese schools 21, 106, 111–12, 190, 193–200
- elite schools 130, 200, 203
- English schools 186–8, 193–4, 199–200
- Malay schools 186, 190, 193–4, 197, 199
- National Education Program 3, 197–9
- Tamil schools 197–9
- vernacular schools 193, 195–6, 199
- See also* Japanese Occupation; language; Nanyang University
- election 14, 17, 33, 105, 108, 110–11, 113–17, 119, 129, 134, 135, 138–40, 155, 169, 197, 200
- 1955 197
- 1959 113, 154–5
- 1968 129
- 1984 134
- 2006 138
- 2011 138–9, 169, 200
- 2015 139, 140, 169
- employment 152, 154–5, 157, 159–61, 164, 167. *See also* New International Division of Labour (NIDL)
- local workers 169
- low-paid foreign workers 161–2
- transient workers 161–2
- ethnic/racial identity 181–2, 187, 190, 192–3, 195–8. *See also* multiracialism
- Eurasians 89, 90, 180–1, 188. *See also* Chinese Singaporean, *peranakan/baba*; hybridity
- exceptionalism 14, 15, 131, 138–9. *See also* technocracy
- Falarti, Maziar Mozaffari 66
- Fang Chuang-Pi 106–7. *See also* Malayan Communist Party
- Farquhar, William 42, 45–7, 73–7, 79, 142, 144, 175
- Federal Parliament 24, 117, 119, 120, 129, 134–6, 138, 164
- Federation of Malaysia 2, 26, 102, 108, 110, 116, 154
- referendum, 1963 116
- See also* Malayan Union

- Fong Swee Suan 196  
 foreign  
   capital 152, 155  
   talent 152  
 Forward Policy 94. *See also* Malay Peninsula  
 fundamental liberties 136  
 Furnivall, J.S., socially fragmented 'plural society' 85, 182
- Genealogy of the Malay Kings (Malay Annals)*  
 44, 51–3, 66–7, 69  
 geographical segregation of communities  
 179–80  
 Global City Prize 1  
 global oil traffic 37, 41, 59  
 Goh Chok Tong 13, 14, 125, 126, 131, 136–9, 159  
   'no highest peak' speech, 1982 13–14  
 Goh Chor Boon, *From Traders to Innovators* 168  
 Goh Keng Swee 114, 116–18, 127, 130, 134, 155, 191, 199  
 government-linked company (GLC) 129, 159, 162, 167. *See also* Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC); Sheng-Li Holdings; Temasek Holdings  
 Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC) 159, 165, 167  
 Governor General of India 27, 29–30, 42–3, 45, 60, 65, 71–2, 77–9, 82, 85  
 Great Britain. *See* British Empire  
 Guillemard, Laurence 95
- Hack, Karl 6, 8, 58  
 Harvard University. *See* Kennedy School of Government  
 Hastings, Lord/Marquis of 42, 45–7, 56, 71–3  
 Hastings, Warren 42, 46, 71–2  
 Heng, Derek 3, 58  
 'Hock Lee Riot', 1955 22, 196. *See also* riots  
 Holland. *See* Netherlands, The  
 Hon Sui Sen 152, 155, 159. *See also* Economic Development Board (EDB)  
 Hong Kong 2, 12, 33, 34, 38, 40, 126, 146, 153, 164, 167, 168, 170, 180  
 Hong Lim Park 138  
 Horsburgh Lighthouse 147  
 Huang Jianli 19  
 Hussain Mahummud Shah 43, 72, 81–2. *See also* Raffles Landing, 1819  
 Huxley, Tim 123
- hybridity 179–87. *See also* Chinese Singaporean, *peranakan/baba*; Eurasians
- Ibrahim, Sultan 94  
 immigration  
   from China 185, 188  
   policy 101, 138, 169  
 India 4, 47–8, 53, 90, 191, 198  
 Indian Presidency 77. *See also* Straits Settlements  
 Indian Singaporean 89–90, 153–4, 179–80, 183–4, 187. *See also* Chettiars; education, Tamil schools; language; Singhalese; Tamils  
 Indonesia 4, 16, 24, 27–8, 32, 35, 40–1, 62, 63, 74, 75, 78, 89, 95, 127, 146, 149, 152, 157, 169, 170, 198  
   Aceh 35, 42, 49, 54, 71, 146  
   Batam 42, 62, 169–70  
   Bencoolen 42, 73, 74, 77, 101  
   Bintan 42–4, 47, 52–4, 56, 57, 62, 67, 70, 75, 169, 170  
   Java 7, 41–2, 47, 49, 51, 55, 56, 67, 76, 141, 176, 179–81, 190  
   Karimun 35, 42–7  
   Konfrontasi 24, 127  
   Lingga 52, 54, 70  
   Majapahit Empire 7, 51, 67  
   Minangkabau 55, 89  
   Palembang 48, 51–2, 66, 68  
   Riau 7, 31–2, 35, 42–4, 52, 53, 55, 62, 65, 70–4, 79, 81, 101, 106, 141–4, 146, 169–70, 174–6  
   Spice Islands 48, 53  
   Srivijaya Kingdom 48–9  
   Sulawesi, Makassar 55, 146, 176, 179  
   Sumatra 32, 35, 41–2, 48, 49, 51, 52, 55–6, 66–7, 70, 76, 141, 151, 152, 176, 179  
 industrial parks 167, 170. *See also* SIJORI  
 industry 31, 168  
   business services 168  
   finance 168  
   manufacturing 63, 154, 157, 168–9  
   oil refinery, manufacturing and export 41, 151–2, 162  
   pepper and gambier plantation 11, 31, 53, 55, 59, 83, 88, 142, 144–5, 147–9, 175, 179  
   rubber plantation 59  
   shipping 30–9, 48, 62, 126, 147–9, 152–4, 157–8, 164, 184. *see also* shipping industry  
   tin and gold mining 59, 66, 146