

**Singapore vs Malaysia in numbers**  
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COMMENT Malaysia and Singapore were once one country until they separated in 1965 and between themselves, they are one of each other's largest trading partners and investors.

Of all the nationalities working and living in Singapore, Malaysians form the largest component. There are 350,000 Malaysians working in Singapore, plus an estimated of another 100,000 to 200,000 living or studying in the city state.

johor singapore causeway 041106The number of Malaysians who have ever worked or lived in Singapore may be more than a million, and possibly a few million Malaysians have relatives working, living or studying in the republic.

There is no statistics on the total number Malaysians living in Singapore - on work permits, employment pass, S-pass, long-term visit pass, entrepreneur pass, student pass - as permanent residents and those who have taken up Singapore citizenship.

According to the latest census data released by the Singapore Department of Statistics in August, of the number of Singapore permanent residents which almost doubled from 287,500 in 2000 to 541,000 this year, most of the ethnic Chinese PRs hail from Malaysia.

Here's a review of the Singapore Yearbook of Statistics 2010 released in July:

\* Singapore's per capita GNI (gross national income) decreased by 6.9 percent from S\$55,816 (RM129,573) to S\$52,251 (RM121,298) from 2007 to 2009.

\* Malaysia and Singapore's per capita GNI for 2009 (according to PPP - purchasing power parity) was US\$13,530 (RM42,164) and US\$49,850 (RM155,348) respectively.

\* Singapore's total external trade decreased by 8 percent, from S\$810 billion (RM1.9 trillion) to S\$747 billion (RM1.7 trillion) from 2006 to 2009.

Malaysia's total external trade for 2009 was RM988 billion.

So, even if Singapore becomes the world's fastest growing economy, growing by say 13 percent to S\$845 billion (RM2 trillion), we may only be getting back to the 2007 level, which may still be below 2008's S\$928 billion (RM2.2 trillion).

Malaysia's GDP growth is projected to be about 7 percent this year.

In other words, Singapore's expected spectacular growth for this year, may have to be seen in the context of the tremendous decline of 19.4 percent last year.

It is also somewhat puzzling that whilst Singapore's GDP growth for the first six months was 17.9 percent, the seasonally adjusted retail sales index has shown a month-on-month contraction since February.

\* Singapore's public debt, which is entirely domestic, grew by 132 percent from S\$126 billion (RM292 billion) to S\$292 billion (RM677 billion) from 1999 to 2009.

Malaysia's public debt is about RM150 billion, which is 47.8 percent of GDP, and ranked 49th in the world, compared to Singapore's ranking of 8th at 101.2 percent of GDP.

\* Singapore's official foreign reserves grew by 106 percent from S\$128 billion (RM298 billion) to S\$264 billion (RM613 billion) from 1999 to 2009.

Malaysia's official foreign reserves is about RM296 billion.

Is there any connection between the growth in foreign reserves to public debt, considering that the Central Provident Fund (CPF) board uses its monies to purchase non-marketable Singapore government bonds to match the 2.5 and 4 percent interest payable on the various CPF accounts?

The amount of CPF due to members has grown by 89 percent, from S\$88 billion (RM205 billion) to S\$167 billion (RM387 billion) from 1999 to 2009. How much of this is due to Malaysians who work or have ever worked in Singapore?

Perhaps the question that may need to be asked is to what extent Singaporeans' and Malaysians' CPF contributions may have contributed to the Government Investment Corporation's (GIC) and state investment company Temasek's growth over the years?

Budget surpluses?

\* The Singaporean population grew by only 1.1 percent, permanent residents (PRs) grew by 11.5 percent, and foreigners by 4.8 percent in 2009. How many of them are Malaysians?

\* The number of unemployed residents hit a 10-year high of 116,300 in 2009. How many are Malaysian PRs?

\* Labour productivity fell by 0.1, 7.2 and 3.9 percent in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively.

\* The balance in the Development Fund has increased from S\$23 billion (RM53 billion) in 1998 to S\$99 billion (RM231 billion) in 2008.

As I understand that annual transfers to the Development Fund are not registered as an expenditure in Singapore's Budget, this huge accumulation of the Development Fund over the years, may, in a way, mask the budget surpluses declared every year.

\* Against the tremendous growth in the population, the number of hospital beds has hardly changed - from 11,742 in 1999 to 11,663 in 2009.

So, is it any wonder that people are complaining about the difficulty of having to wait very long for admission to hospitals, particularly for the subsidised Class C and B2 wards?

LEONG SZE HIAN's late father moved from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore in 1952. Since he was born in Singapore in 1953, there may be some confusion as to whether he was conceived in Malaysia or Singapore.

His next article will be on how the recent amendments to the CPF (Central Provident Fund) Act may effect Malaysians.

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