

## Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam has 400,000 inhabitants. It boasts one of the highest GDP per capita in Asia, thanks to vast oil and natural gas reserves. Brunei has three levels of administrative subdivision: four *daerah* (districts), 38 *mukim* (wards) and hundreds of *kampung* (villages). Only the largest of the four districts has a population of more than 150,000 and the average for the four is much lower, so that the administrative divisions do not meet our population criteria.

Brunei was a British protectorate until 1984 (except during Japanese occupation for 1942-45). In the early 1950s Sultan Omar Ali pursued autonomy at the same time that Malaysia sought to become an independent state. The sultan, who believed that Brunei was too small to survive alone, initiated talks to join Malaysia as an autonomous region, similar to Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak, but the talks broke down over control of Brunei's vast oil resources (Saunders 2002). Brunei remained a British protectorate with extensive internal autonomy until it became independent in 1984 (Poole 2009). It continues to be an absolute monarchy with hereditary rule. National elections were abolished in 1970 though officials at the *mukim* level are directly elected (Poole 2009: 148). The 1984 Constitution makes no mention of local government or decentralization.

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## References

### ***Primary Sources***

Brunei Darussalam. (1984). Constitution.

### ***Secondary Sources***

Poole, Peter A. (2009). *Politics and Society in Southeast Asia*. London: McFarland & Company, Inc.

Saunders, Graham. (2002). *A History of Brunei, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon.