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Q4

What problems are germane to the decolonization process in the Malay Peninsula?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS I · 10 marks · History of the World

History of the world will include events from the 18th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, redrawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization, political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc. - their forms and effect on the society.

Core demand of the question

- What problems are germane to the decolonization process in the Malay Peninsula?
- Cover plural society, communist insurgency, federation design, and Singapore's exit
- Keep the explanation within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Colonial economy split Malays, Chinese, and Indians into unequal roles, so citizenship was the first problem.

Malayan Union failed; the 1948 Federation restored Malay rulers and tighter belonging.

The Emergency mixed decolonization with anti-communist war and resettlement.

Malaysia 1963 tried to balance Singapore and Borneo; Konfrontasi tested the borders.

Singapore's 1965 exit showed the federation bargain was not settled.

Flow diagram

Plural Malays Chinese Indians -> Citizenship sultans

Emergency 1948-60 -> Independence 1957

Citizenship sultans -> Independence 1957

Independence 1957 -> Malaysia 1963

Malaysia 1963 -> Singapore exit 1965

Conclusion

- Treat germane problems as communal arithmetic, guerrilla war, and federal design, not as a missing nationalist party.
- **Compare with India only carefully:** Malaya had no single Congress-type majority community covering the whole peninsula.

Decolonization in the Malay Peninsula was shaped by a plural society, a long Emergency, and a fragile federation that soon lost Singapore. The germane problems were who belonged, who fought, and how the map of Malaysia could hold.

Facts & figures

Malayan Union, 1946

British plan that cut sultan power and eased citizenship; withdrawn after Malay opposition.

Federation of Malaya, 1948 / independence 1957

Restored rulers and a path to merdeka under Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Malayan Emergency, 1948-60

Guerrilla war against the Malayan Communist Party during the transfer of power.

Malaysia, 1963

Federation adding Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak to Malaya.

Singapore, 1965

Separation from Malaysia after political and communal conflict inside the new state.

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