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## All Things Singaporean

**D**O YOU know that Irishman Dennis Santry designed the Sultan Mosque, drawing inspiration from the Taj Mahal and the Dome of the Rock? Or that in the 1960s and 1970s, Singapore hosted the Formula Asia Grand Prix at the Upper Thomson Road circuit? What about the fact that "The Swallows" is the only Singaporean music band to have had a hit in West Germany?

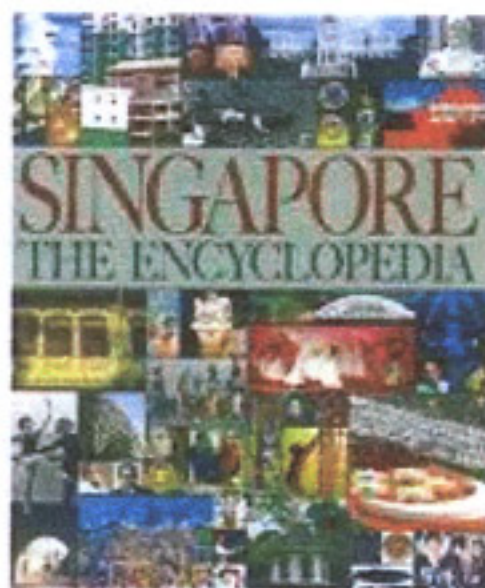
If you're into Singaporean trivia then the recently launched *Singapore: The Encyclopedia* is the reference book for you. The 640-page encyclopaedia has taken over two years to produce. It is jointly published by the National Heritage Board and Editions Didier Millet.

Filled with facts, information, and trivia about the country, it is a vivid illustration of the city-state and its people both past and present. Historical and contemporary figures and events find their place in this volume, which will give readers an excellent picture of the country four decades after achieving its independence.

The Encyclopedia covers not just the famous but also the infamous—with entries on personalities like Michael Fay, serial killer Adrian Lim, and porn star Annabel Chong. Other interesting facts include:


- Singer Paula Abdul had a hand in the establishment of Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf in Singapore
- The site of Bukit Merah interchange was once known as Beehoon Plain because villagers once dried their rice vermicelli there
- The first person to put Tamil on the Internet was a Singaporean

- Metro departmental store is named after Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer
- The Sultan of Johor once offered Singapore as a gift to a Scottish sailor who subsequently rejected it on the grounds that Singapore could be of no use to a private person
- The world's largest reptile, longest snake, and the largest venomous snake were found in Singapore, and
- Coconut oil was once used to light street lamps in Singapore.



The full-colour volume contains half a million words, 2,000 pictures, and over 2,500 entries on Singapore's history, geography, economy, law, politics, arts, culture, entertainment, architecture, food, and natural history. The text is provided by over 230 contributors.

It is the first time that such a laudable project has been done. While it is a very well-produced reference, perhaps the text and pictures could have been made a little larger which may bring up the cost a little. The word spacing is also not tight enough in certain entries.

Among the 36 sponsors of the project are Keppel Corporation, Tien Wah Press Pte Ltd, Khoo Foundation, Tan Foundation, Singapore Press Holdings, and the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts. The amount raised for the project was S\$1.3 million.  — TCT