CHAPTER V
SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA
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The constitutional setting and nature of polity of Singapore have been discussed and analysed in earlier chapters. To get a clear picture of the functioning of democracy in Singapore, it is necessary to examine the nature of polity in relation to the political system of a nation having, by and large identical characteristics, such as Malaysia. The comparison is meant to provide an insight into the similarities and differences of both the countries. At the same time it would provide a clear picture of the nature of polity in Singapore.

Singapore and Malaysia have cultural and linguistic similarities. Both the countries have multi-racial population consisting of Malays, Chinese and Indians. Both the countries were under British colonial rule, though Singapore was ruled as a separate colony.¹ Singapore became independent as a part of Federation of Malaysia as it emerged in September 1963.² Because of its geographical location, the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew always considered independent Singapore "a foolish and absurd proposition".³

In 1964 there were communal riots resulting from racial

² Straits Times (Singapore) 27 September 1963.
conflicts between Malays and Chinese in the Federation. This resulted in the deterioration of relations between the predominantly Chinese government in Singapore and predominantly Malay Central Government in Kuala Lumpur. The PAP in 1964, interfered in the politics of Malaysia by putting up its candidates for election in nine of the constituencies in peninsular Malaysia. The PAP tried to replace the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) in the alliance. In May 1965 Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew gathered all the opposition parties to join Malaysian Solidarity Convention which stood for "Malaysian Malaysia". As a result in August 1965, Singapore was expelled from the Federation.

Both Singapore and Malaysia, on independence, inherited a political system modelled on British Parliamentary Democracy with a Prime Minister, the real head of the executive branch and a nominal head of the state who acted on the aid and advice of the cabinet. Malaysia was a federal state where as Singapore due to its small size became a unitary state. Unlike Singapore which is a republic, Malaysia adopted a system of

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6 Clutterbuck, n.4, p.283.

constitutional monarchy. The King was elected every four years from among the Sultans. According to article 38 of the Malaysian constitution there shall be a Majlis Raja Raja (conference of rulers) consisting of nine Sultans of Malay states. Its function was to elect the Yangdi Pertuan Agong, the nominal head of the state and his deputy Timbalan Yangdi Pertuan Agong. Islam was the religion of the State. Executive, legislature and judiciary were important organs of the government. Singapore adopted a unicameral legislature whereas Malaysian legislature was bicameral, consisting of two houses - House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat) which is popularly elected and Senate (Dewan Negara). The Bills were passed in the House of Representatives and then transmitted to the Senate. Generally second chambers are supposed to "prevent hasty and ill considered legislations". But in Malaysia the Senate acted as a "rubber stamp of the House of

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10 Ahmad Ibrahim, "The Position of Islam in the Constitution of Malaysia" In Tun Mohamed Suffian and others, ibid., p.49.


Representatives".  

Contribution of Opposition to the Parliament

In Singapore from 1965 to 1980, there was no single opposition member in the Parliament. Therefore the contribution of opposition to the Parliament was of no significance.

In Malaysia, the strength of the opposition reduced considerably from 1964 to 1978 election. In 1964 the opposition won 47 seats out of 159 in the House of Representatives. Even in Malaysia the contribution of the opposition to the Parliament was very limited because of the government's policies. For instance, the members were not allowed to ask more than twenty questions for an oral reply and not more than five questions for a written reply in one meeting of the House. The government justified it by saying that it was to ensure that "as few questions as possible are left unanswered in the House". In 1973 the combined

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opposition proposed amendments to the standing order of the Parliament. These amendments included four days notice to be given before any bill was read for the second time, extended time for debates on the budget and removal of limitations on oral and written questions.\textsuperscript{18} These amendments were considered unnecessary and the committee not only rejected the proposed amendments but also recommended that "the Speaker may if he thinks fit, prescribe time limit for speeches".\textsuperscript{19} This clearly indicates the government's misuse of power in suppressing the voice of the opposition.

The Sedition Act also contributed to weakening the role of opposition in the Parliament. Any public discussion even by a member of Parliament on power and status of Malay rulers, Malay Special Privileges, Citizenship Laws, Malay as National language and Islam as the religion were considered seditious.\textsuperscript{20}

The opposition members protested against this act. They claimed that banning sensitive issues would bring electoral advantages to the Alliance because MCA and MIC could not attract the attention of the dominant United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) on certain vital issues. It would also infringe on the privilege of free speech to Parliament


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p.38.

because discussing certain issues barred by the constitution and yet incompatible with the principle of sovereignty of Parliament was banned. The newly entrenched clauses could never be repealed because it would be a criminal offence to raise the issue by some motion.

Ministerial Responsibility of the Parliament

Ministerial responsibility is difficult to enforce in a state with one-party dominance. In Singapore the People's Action Party (PAP) was the ruling party and there was no single opposition member in the Parliament from 1965 to 1980. The ministers belonged to the political party which commands majority in the Parliament. Due to absence of opposition, there was no criticism from the Parliament to make the executive responsible to the legislature. It was very easy for the executive to get the bills passed by the Parliament without any opposition. This was evident from the Employment Bill (1968), Abortion Bill (1969) and Newspaper and Printing Presses Bill (1974) passed by the Parliament. The Employment Act deprived the workers of some of their rights and imposed restrictions on them. Abortion Act legalised abortion in cases where mother's economic and social conditions were low. This Act ignored the humanitarian and medical grounds. Newspaper and Printing Press Act imposed

21 Chan Heng Chee, "Legislature and Legislators" In Jon S.T. Quah and others, eds., Government and Politics of Singapore (Singapore, 1985), p.76.
restrictions on newspaper and curtailed freedom of press. Inspite of their undemocratic nature these bills were enacted due to lack of opposition in the Parliament. This clearly showed that ministerial responsibility was not enforced in Singapore.

In Malaysia UMNO was the dominant party in the alliance. In cases of mal-administration and corruption, the government tried to appoint committees for investigation and report to the ministers concerned. The government was reluctant to divulge such cases in the public. For instance in 1973, there were charges of mal-administration in the Mallacca hospital. An opposition leader brought this issue to the attention of Health Minister. Though the Health Minister ordered investigation into the matter, the findings and deliberations were not made public. The opposition leader tried to bring the matter to the Federal Parliament by proposing a cut motion. But the motion was defeated in the Parliament. The call by the opposition members to dismiss the hospital staff was ignored by the government. It was evident that party unity and discipline were given more importance and this tended to prevent the operation of convention of individual responsibility. The back benchers even if they agreed with

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22 Puthucheary, "Ministerial responsibility in Malaysia" In Tun Mohamed Suffian and others, n.9, p.128.

23 Straits Times (Singapore), 25 August 1973.

24 Puthucheary, n.22, p.124.
the opposition, tended to support the erring minister to maintain unity in the party. This clearly shows ministerial responsibility was not implemented in Malaysia.

Judiciary is the guardian of the constitution. Singapore judiciary lacked independence. The government controlled the judges by short-term appointments.25

In Malaysia, the judiciary showed a high standard of independence. In a case in 1966, Datuk Ningkan politically at odds with the Federal government, won the case against his dismissal by the governor of Sarawak. But later when he was dismissed under the powers conferred by the Emergency Act, he failed to obtain declaration that the act was null and void.26

Both Malaysia and Singapore were multi-racial societies. Quite interestingly, however, in Singapore all the citizens were treated as equals irrespective of their race and religion and with no special privileges to any particular community.27

The Malaysian constitution gave special privileges to Malays in scholarships, access to educational institutions, employment and allocations of jobs, business and licenses. Substantial amount of land was also reserved for Malays. Article 153 states that it is the duty of Yangdi Pertuan Agong


to safeguard the Malays and legitimate interests of the other communities. This was done with a view to achieve greater degree of equality to achieve short run balance of power between Malays and non-Malayas. "These provisions were psychologically and symbolically significant to Malays." The Malays felt that they being the indigenous people should be given special considerations and the special rights which were already there under the British rule should not be terminated. Any attack on these rights was viewed as a threat to the position of Malays. The opposition criticized this provision and stressed that any constitutional provisions should be on the grounds of economic weakness rather than racial origin.

In exchange for certain special privileges and reservations for the Malays being Bhumi putras (sons of the soil), the non-Malays were benefitted from further relaxation in granting citizenship by virtue of the principle of Jus soli. This meant extending it to every person born in the Federation. In 1958 alone, 8,00,000 non-Malays became citizens. This increased the voting strength and political power of the Chinese. An important feature of the bargain was not explicitly stated in the constitution. The Chinese continued to play a dominant role in business and trade free

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28 Federal Constitution, n.11, Article 153, p.110.
29 Milne and Mauzy, n.13, p.40.
30 Ibid.
from hindrances and persecution.

In both the countries, language played an important role in the nation building process. In Singapore, though Malay was declared the national language, Malay, Chinese, English and Tamil were declared the official languages.\(^{31}\) To promote Singaporean national identity, the government encouraged bilingualism and multilingualism. Bilingualism was made compulsory in schools. Housing Development Board flats were built in such a way that population of different races were scattered in proportion to their number in the country.\(^{32}\) Singapore’s approach to multiculturalism included promotion of bilingual education, religious freedom, and separation of religion and politics.\(^{33}\) The Singapore constitution made equality of all the races and languages the essence of its racial policy whereas Malaysian constitution provided compromise among different races.

Malaysian constitution provided that Malay would be the national language, but for a period of ten years English would be allowed to be used for official purposes.\(^{34}\) No person


shall be prohibited from using, teaching or learning any other language. In 1974, National Language Act was introduced. According to this act, national language must be used for official purposes. The Yandi Pertuan Agong, however, would permit the use of English for such official purposes as may be deemed fit. The Federal and State government "would use any translations of official documents or communications in language of any other community in the federation for such purposes as was deemed necessary in the public interest."35 This act gave the speaker discretion to allow English and permit its use quite liberally. However it was announced in 1975 that Malay would be the official language and English would be allowed in exceptional circumstances.36

The government took strict measures to maintain unity and harmony among the people of different races. The 1971 Constitutional Amendment Act removed sensitive issues like Malay special privileges, Malay as national language, and Islam as the State religion from the realm of public discussion.37 This act not only benefitted Malays but also non-malays because it is forbidden to discuss why a particular community should be given citizenship.38

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35 Datar, n.5, p.81.
36 New Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur), 20 December 1975.
The fundamental liberties in Singapore Constitution were taken from the Malaysian Constitution. Both the constitutions of Malaysia and Singapore provided for liberty of person, prohibition of banishment, freedom of movement, freedom of speech, assembly and association. In both the countries Internal Security Act was used to suppress the opposition parties. The Internal Security Act had predated the emergence of Singapore. Under the British rule, it was called Preservation of Public Security Ordinance (PPSO). In 1955, Preservation of Public Security Ordinance was imposed by the British to combat communist subversion. This Ordinance gave Governor-in-Council the power to detain any individual without trial for a maximum period of two years.

In 1963, PPSO was amended and the Internal Security Act of the Federation of Malaysia was extended to cover Singapore.

Nevertheless, in Singapore and Malaysia, several restrictions were imposed on fundamental liberties. In Singapore, Internal Security Act was used to detain the opponents of the ruling party without trial. Through Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act the government could detain a person if satisfied that he is associated with activities of

39 Federal Constitution, n.11, Articles 5-13, pp.3-10.

a criminal nature.\textsuperscript{41} The Employment Act denied the workers' right to strike.\textsuperscript{42} By using these provisions, the Singapore government suppressed the fundamental liberties of the people.

In Malaysia, restriction on fundamental rights were imposed by a number of acts and ordinances. Internal Security Act (1960), Sedition Ordinance (1948, amended in 1970), the Public Order (Preservation) Ordinance (1958), etc. According to Article 149, "an act imposing restriction must recite that any action has been taken or threatened by any substantial body of persons" whether inside or outside the Federation to do a number of things including promoting disaffection against "Yangdi Pertuan Agong or the government or promoting feeling of ill will and hostility between different races or other classes of the population likely to cause violence".\textsuperscript{43}

According to the Internal Security Act, a person could be detained without trial. The Malaysian government also used this Act to suppress opposition. In 1969 after the riots, Lim Kit Siang, a leader of Democratic Action Party (DAP), a strong opposition party was detained under Internal Security

\textsuperscript{41} Tremewan, n.14, p.200.

\textsuperscript{42} Walden Bello and Stephanie Rosenfeld, \textit{Dragons in Distress: Asia's Miracle Economics in Crisis} (San Francisco, 1990), p.304.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Federal Constitution}, n.11, pp.104-105.
Act. Article 150 provided for a state of emergency. It was stated that none of the ordinances proclaimed during the period of emergency shall be invalid because of its inconsistencies with the fundamental liberties. The emergency was imposed after the riots in May 1969. From 1969-1971, all the Legislative Assemblies and also the Parliament were suspended. The government ruled by a decree through National Operations Council.

In both Malaysia and Singapore restrictions on fundamental liberties affected the opposition parties quite adversely. The parties suspected of having communist links had their members detained quite frequently.

Political Parties

Existence of political parties is a pre-requisite for a functional democracy. It is the people who elect the ruling party and the ruling party in turn represents the interests and aspirations of the people. Both Malaysia and Singapore since independence and even earlier had been witnessing the dominance of one party. In Malaysia it was United Malays

44 Lee Kam Hing, "Three Approaches in Peninsular Malaysian Chinese Politics: The MCA, the DAP and the Gerakan", In Zakaria Haji Ahmad, n.8, p.82.

45 S. Jaya Kumar, "Emergency Powers in Malaysia", In Tun Muhammed Suffian and others, n.9, p.332.

46 Datar, n.5, p.51.

47 Ong, n.15, p.41. Also see Le Poer, n.32, p.193.
National Organization (UMNO) which had prominent position in the alliance till 1972 and later in Barisan Nasional, a coalition of different parties. In Singapore the PAP established its dominating position since 1959. Although opposition parties existed in both the countries, they did not make much impact on the politics of the country.

Following the end of the World War II, in both Singapore and Malaysia colonial rule gave rise to the emergence of anti-colonial parties. Most important political parties that emerged in Singapore were the People’s Action Party (PAP) led by Lee Kuan Yew and the Labour Front led by David Marshall.48 In Malaysia it was the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). These three parties formed an alliance as a compromise between three racial groups.49 UMNO was a pro-Malay Party.50 It called for giving special position and privileges to the Malays. It demanded that their position must be strengthened and made permanent until all racial groups were in a position of equal opportunity. MCA was a Chinese party representing the interests of the Chinese. It started as a welfare organization in 1949 and in 1952 it became a

48 David Marshall, Leader of the Labour Front became the first Chief Minister of the State of Singapore.

49 Milne and Mauzy, n.13, p.135.

50 Datar, n.5, p.12.
political party.\textsuperscript{51} MIC founded in 1946, represented the interests of the Indians.\textsuperscript{52}

In Singapore PAP was the ruling party. Unlike UMNO, PAP was formed by a group of middle class English educated intellectuals, lawyers, teachers, trade unionists and other professionals. It built up an extensive organizational network at the grass-root level to mobilize the population.\textsuperscript{53} Like UMNO, PAP also claimed to have no ideology except that of pragmatism and development. PAP tried to suppress all the communist members in the party.\textsuperscript{54} The pro-communist members were arrested whenever they posed a threat to the party's leadership. It even changed the party's constitution to ensure that no communist member entered the party. PAP won all the seats in the Parliament in all the election held between 1965 and 1980.\textsuperscript{55} During the PAP rule the country developed rapidly. Lee Kuan Yew was the undisputed leader of the party. In 1980 the parties started giving power and responsibility to the younger generation leaders to maintain the continuity

\textsuperscript{51} Milne and Mauzy, n.13, p.125.


\textsuperscript{54} Le Poer, n.32, p.49.

of the leadership.  

Leader of the UMNO, Tunku Abdul Rahman became the first Prime Minister of Malaysia and continued to be so till 1969. In 1967 the Alliance government dominated by UMNO passed National Language Act. In 1969 following the ethnic riots, a new economic policy was announced by the government. It aimed at "eradicating poverty among all races and to eliminate the identification of race with occupation". It mainly concentrated on the upliftment of Malays through urbanization and creation of a Bhumi putra middle class. After the riots in 1969 the Prime Minister and President of UMNO, Tunku Abdul Rahman was challenged by Mahathir Mohammad a UMNO backbencher. He wrote a letter to the Prime Minister "demanding his resignation". In a party meeting Mahathir Mohammad presented a petition signed by Malay students supporting his letter. Mahathir Mohammad was dismissed from the Supreme Executive Council of the party and his letter was banned under ISA stating that distribution of this letter might lead to three years of imprisonment and a fine of 2000 dollars.

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57 Datar, n.5, p.38.


60 Malaysian Digest (Kuala Lumpur) 14 January 1970.
In May 1969, the government imposed emergency under Article 150 of the Federal Constitution, and the government ruled by a decree through National Operations Council (NOC). The Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak was appointed as the director of NOC. The NOC formed a National Consultative Committee (NCC) to establish positive and practical guidelines for "inter-racial cooperation and racial integration for the growth of Malaysian identity". In mid August 1970 it drafted a national ideology called "Rukunegara". Its principles were "belief in God, loyalty to the King, upholding the constitution, rule of law, good behaviour and morality". In 1971 emergency was revoked and the Parliament was reconvened.

In 1971 UMNO faced a threat from the radicals. The UMNO youth Presidency and Vice-Presidency was won by radicals - Dato Harun and Encik Musa Hitam. To consolidate his leadership in the party Tun Razak put forward proposals for amendment of the constitution of the party. The amendments led to strengthening the power of the Supreme Executive Council of the party. The Supreme Executive Council consisted of President and his deputy, five Vice Presidents, a General

61 Malaysian Digest (Kuala Lumpur) 14 January 1970.
63 Ibid., p.174.
Secretary, a Treasurer etc. Its powers were to oversee and supervise divisions and state liaison committees, formulate policies and plans and to oversee and decide on matters connected with state and national elections etc. The amendments included party elections every three years instead of annually, measures for stricter party discipline and selection of Parliamentary and state party candidates by the Supreme Executive Council. The proposals were passed despite accusations that the SEC was "grabbing the power" from party divisions.65

After the May 1969 riots, the inadequacy of the Alliance was realised. The UMNO decided to expand the alliance so that racial parties would not incite racial feelings to outbid the ruling alliance. In 1972 for the first time political parties outside the alliance were invited to a meeting. The discussions included coalition with Partai Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) and the formation of a national front of Malaysian political parties. The motive, as suggested behind the proposal of national front was to free energies and resources for economic development.66 Thus in 1974 a new political party, Barisan Nasional (National Front) was formed.67

Unlike Singapore which had one party dominance, Malaysia

65 Straits Times (Singapore) 8 May 1971.
66 Datar, n.5, p.197.
was ruled by alliance till 1974, and later Barisan Nasional, a coalition of various political parties. But UMNO which had always dominated the alliance continued to dominate the Barisan Nasional as well.

In Singapore there was no change of leadership from 1965-1980. There was nobody to challenge the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew. In Malaysia Tuku Abdul Rahman had to resign in 1970. Tun Razak the director of the National Operations Council succeeded him as the Prime Minister. After Tun Razak’s death in 1976 Datuk Hussein Onn became the Prime Minister.

In both these countries ruling parties used Internal Security Act (ISA) and other measures to suppress opposition. In Malaysia the political parties represented different racial groups. UMNO, PAS and party Nagara were Malay parties. The UMNO, established in 1946, championed the rights of the Malays. Party Nagara established in 1954 by Dato Onn, represented Malays. PAS established in 1955 was an Islamic religious and Malay communal party.

Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and United Democratic Party (UDP) were Chinese parties. MCA organised as a welfare association in 1949, became a political organization in

68 Milne and Mauzy, n.13, p.173.
69 Funston, n.64, p.282.
70 Ibid., p.135.
71 Straits Times, (Singapore) 20 October 1962.
1952. The UDP and Gerakan established in 1962 and 1968 respectively tried to project a multi-racial image but were regarded as Chinese parties. Malaysian Indian Congress represented the interests of the Indians in Malaysia.

In Singapore no major political party was communal. PAP, Barisan Sosialis, United National Front, United People’s Front never appealed to ethnic sentiments in order to win votes. This was partly because of the influence of socialist ideas and partly because all these parties were led by English educated middle class.

The Opposition Parties

Unlike Singapore which did not have a single opposition member in the Parliament, in Malaysia the opposition parties won seats in the Parliament. In 1967 election the opposition won 47 out of a total of 144 seats, in 1974 the opposition won 19 out of 154 and in 1978 it won 23 out of 154 seats. Like Singapore, in Malaysia also elections were controlled by the ruling party. Mass media such as television and radio were under the control of the government. Most of the political

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72 Milne and Mauzy, n.13, p.34.
75 Ong, n.15, p.41.
76 Ponkili, n.34, p.207.
parties joined the National Front. "The opposition accepted it (the National Front) to maintain unity and stability of the country or they realised that they would be left out of national politics if they did not join the alliance".\textsuperscript{77}

In both Singapore and Malaysia, the opposition parties were allowed to exist constitutionally. But most of the opposition members were arrested under Internal Security Act or other acts passed by the Parliament whenever they posed a threat to the ruling party. In Singapore most of the Barisan Sosialis members were arrested and detained under ISA before 1965.\textsuperscript{78} In Malaysia Lim Kit Siang, the leader of Democratic Action Party (DAP) was detained in 1969.\textsuperscript{79} In Malaysia, Sedition Act imposed restriction on election campaign by banning certain issues from public discussion.\textsuperscript{80} This crippled the opposition political parties. This act removed the protection of the members of Parliament in respect of anything said by them in the legislature. Most of the political issues on which the opposition parties could gather support were placed outside the scope of discussion. Therefore, there were no major issues for campaigning for election. During 1974 election, manifestos of all the

\textsuperscript{77} Datar, n.5, p.106.
\textsuperscript{79} Lee Kam Hing, n.44, p.82.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Straits Times} (Kuala Lumpur), 18 August 1974.
opposition parties were similar. They promised to promote equality and justice.

In both these countries the government's policies led to the emergence of loyal opposition parties. In Singapore the Societies Act gave the government the right to deny and cancel registration to any association or party which, according to the government was antagonistic to the national interests. Therefore the opposition parties could not be antagonistic to the government.

In Malaysia the ruling party eliminated the opposition parties by incorporating them into the National Front. After the formation of the National Front only three opposition parties were present in the Parliament. It was reduced to two in 1976 when Sarawak National Party (SNAP) joined the National Front.

Nature of Polity

Nature of polity in Singapore and Malaysia was characterised by one party dominance, suppression of opposition, restrictions on fundamental liberties and mass media and significant role of bureaucracy. In both the countries, the ruling party always enjoyed a position of strength in the Parliament. There was little difficulty in

81 Datar, n.5, p.115.
82 Tremewan, n.14, p.195.
83 Ong, n.15, p.40.
getting the necessary votes to support their proposals. The opposition could not contribute to the politics of the country because of the restrictions imposed on them and also because of lack of access to information. The opposition parties had grown weaker.

The ruling elite always tended to suppress the fundamental rights. The interests of the society as a whole were emphasized over those of individual members. The basic rights were accompanied by social responsibilities. Each individual was expected to exercise self restraint and to make sacrifice for the sake of the country. In both Singapore and Malaysia the press was controlled by the government and did not play the role of providing a forum for public discussion on matters of national interest.

In this none so happy situation the civil servants played an important role in the development of these countries. The nexus between politicians and civil servants had been a feature in both these countries. In both Singapore and Malaysia bureaucracy played a crucial role in providing goods and services that were needed daily by the people. Any disruption in civil service would lead to delay in the supply of things that were basic necessities of life.

In Singapore most of the politicians had bureaucratic backgrounds. The government depended on bureaucracy to efficiently implement and legitimise its policies. Civil servants were also involved in the decision making process.
This demanded a higher degree of professionalism. In a functional democracy where opposition exists, only a limited number of ministers could be technocrats and bureaucrats. But in a situation in countries like Singapore and Malaysia, most of them had to be technocrats. Quite expectedly the gap between bureaucracy and ministers got blurred and led to the emergence of an "administrative state", where the role of the administrator became more pronounced and the criticality of the politician's role was reduced.

Even in Malaysia civil servants enjoyed position of power. They played a significant role in the decision making. Since 1970 the position of Malaysian civil service was strengthened because of the role bureaucracy had to play in achieving the aims of New Economic Policy. In Malaysia immediately after independence better educated Malays were predominantly in bureaucracy. Therefore, most of the ministers had administrative backgrounds. Later their number started decreasing. Though the civil servants turned into politicians, they did not continue to be so after becoming ministers. To say that Malaysia is "an administrative state is to forget the strength of ruling party which has been in power". Since 1959 the Prime Minister had to consider the demands of different political parties in the coalition and

84 Puthucheary, n.22, p.107.
85 Milne and Mauzy, n.13, p.278.
86 Puthucheary, n.22, p.108.

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form a policy that was acceptable to all. Thus, though the
civil servants had a significant role in policy making, the
final decision was to emanate from political leadership.

In both Malaysia and Singapore the governments gave
priority to economy over politics. In both the countries the
students were to obtain suitability certificates from the
governments to go for higher education.\textsuperscript{87} In 1964 and 1967 in
Malaysia students demonstrated against the necessity of having
a suitability certificate. This led to their temporary
suspending in 1968. The government tried to keep the
students away from politics. In 1969 the University of Malaya
Students' Union issued a manifesto which called for basic
democratic rights, release of political detainees, freedom of
press, freedom of association, minimum wages for workers and
also for agrarian reforms.\textsuperscript{88} They also supported Mahathir
Mohammad's demand for Tunku Abdul Rehman's resignation. This
resulted in the arrest of four student leaders. In 1971, the
government banned students' associations from having any
affiliations with any political party or trade unions.

In Singapore also the PAP government made it compulsory
for the students to get suitability certificate to go for
higher education and made it clear to the students that
criticising the government and joining communist organizations

\textsuperscript{87} Datar, n.5, p.140.

\textsuperscript{88} Paul Pederson, "Possibilities for Violence in Malaysia"
\textit{Current History} (Philadelphia), vol.61, no.364, December 1971,
p.340.
would jeopardise their career.\textsuperscript{89}

It is clear that both Malaysia and Singapore, though being democratic countries constitutionally, time and again curtailed the freedom of the people. Though both the countries claimed to be democracies, their governments misused powers on the pretext of economic development, suppressed opposition parties and passed bills which were contrary to the tenets of Parliamentary democracy.

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Straits Times} (Singapore), 3 March 1971.