CHAPTER II
CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS
The constitution of a country is a guide to the functioning of the government. To study the parliamentary system of government of Singapore, it would be necessary to have a deeper understanding of its constitutional provisions. The constitution of Singapore is based on the "British model of Parliamentary democracy".\(^1\) It has a written constitution which until 1980 consisted of three basic documents. These documents were - The Constitution of Singapore, The Republic of Singapore Independence Act 1965 and The Constitution of Malaya, part of which continued to apply to Singapore even after separation from the Federation of Malaysia in August 1965.\(^2\) The Constitution provided for three important functionaries of the government - executive, legislature and judiciary. The President was the ceremonial head of the state.

The constitution declared Singapore to be a multiracial state where all the citizens irrespective of their race and religion were treated as equals.\(^3\) The Constitution provided for all the basic provisions for a parliamentary democracy. It provided for a popularly elected government, ministerial responsibility to the parliament and fundamental liberties for the citizens. Despite this, Singapore was criticised as

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\(^3\) *Singapore Constitution*, Part II, Article 8(2), n.1, p.2.
undemocratic and a "police state" because of the government's oppressive policies through legislative enactments, for example the Internal Security Act. This chapter makes an analysis of constitutional developments that took place in Singapore between 1965 and 1980 and the implementation of constitutional provisions.

On 22 December 1965 Singapore Legislative Assembly passed a bill making Singapore an independent Republic headed by a President. The President was to act on the aid and advice of the Prime Minister and his cabinet. He was elected by the Parliament for a four year term. He appointed the Prime Minister and on his advice, other ministers. Prime Minister should be from the party that gained majority votes and should command the confidence of the majority of the members in the Parliament. Though the President was the head of the State, it was the Prime Minister, the popularly elected leader and his cabinet that exercised the real authority.

The Legislature was one of the important organs of government. It consisted of the President and the Parliament. The Parliament was presided over by a Speaker.

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who might be elected by the Parliament from among the members who were neither ministers nor Parliamentary Secretaries.\(^8\)

The main functions of the legislature were law making, channelising the public opinion and integrative function.

Law making was one of the important functions of the legislature. The laws that were enacted in the Parliament determined the policies of the government. The whole procedure of law making gave an impression of being very open and democratic. A bill was printed and circulated among the members of Parliament and a debate on the principles, merits and demerits of the bill took place.\(^9\) Here the opposition parties were given the opportunity to express their views on it before it became an act. Select Committees were set up to give wider exposure to the discussion of the bill.\(^10\) The Legislature invited popular participation in the law making. The Clerk of the Parliament gave a notice in the mass media inviting written submissions of the views from interested groups and individuals. All the submissions were to be considered and necessary amendments made. The bills that required the scrutiny of the Presidential Council went through it. If the Presidential Council gave an adverse report, it

\(^8\) Singapore, Singapore: Facts and Pictures, 1990, n.6, p.16.

\(^9\) Chan Heng Chee, "Legislature and Legislators" In Jon S. T. Quah and other, ed., Government and Politics of Singapore (Singapore, 1985), p.75.

\(^10\) Ibid, 76.
called for fresh amendments. In this case the bill should receive an affirmative vote of not less than two-thirds of the total membership of the Parliament. The recommendations of the Presidential Council was advisory. The money bills and bills affecting the security defence did not need to be referred to the Presidential Council.

The Parliament was to channelise the public opinion by enabling the opposition to express views and open the issues for public debate and criticism. But in Singapore Parliament, there was no opposition to air divergent views on various issues and policies of the government. Hence, the government assigned this task to the backbenchers. The ruling party itself encouraged the members of the Parliament to activate functional interest groups based on trade, employment, etc. to articulate the interests of their respective groups. The legislators from the ruling party were to serve as critics of the government’s policies.

The legislature also performed the function of inculcating a sense of integration in the country by legitimising its policies through established procedures. It also created an "illusory feeling of openness to the people"

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11 *Singapore Constitution*, Article 81K(3), n.1, p.63.
13 Chan Heng Chee, n.9, p.83.
by making its debate open for broadcasting and point media.\textsuperscript{14} The Legislature also performed integrative function by inculcating a sense of participation among the people. School children were regularly brought to observe the legislative body proceedings as a part of the assimilation process.\textsuperscript{15} Being aware of the sensitiveness of the ethnic factor in Singapore, the government also maintained equitable ethnic representation in the Parliament. In 1980, the Parliament consisted of 57 Chinese, 10 Malays, 6 Indians and two Europeans.\textsuperscript{16} The legislators acted as a media between the people and the government. "Weekly People's Sessions" were held by the legislators in their respective constituencies. In these sessions, the members of Parliament met the people personally and got to know the grievances they faced in the daily life like jobs, places in school etc. The members drew attention to these problems in the Parliament.\textsuperscript{17}

Though the functions of legislature in theory seemed to be highly democratic, their implementation did not seem to be the same. In 1965 elections, thirteen Barisan Sosialis members were elected to the Parliament. They followed the policy of boycotting the Parliament as a protest against PAP's

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p.84.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Chan Heng Chee, \textit{Dynamics of One Party Dominance: The PAP at the Grass-roots} (Singapore, 1976), p.108.
\end{footnotesize}
anti-democratic policies. In 1966, all the Barisan Sosialis members resigned from Parliament. This marked the "eclipse of opposition parties in the Singapore legislature". Since there was no opposition in the Parliament, the function of voicing the various opinions of the people could not be performed. Due to emphasis on party discipline, the members could not criticise the policies of the government. The debates in the Parliament "remained mere academic discussions". The opinion of the Parliament reflected the opinion of the ruling party itself. Since all the members of Parliament belonged to the ruling party, there were no chances of anybody opposing any bills. This is evident from the fact that though relevant constitutional provisions were there, there were slim chances for popular opinion to be voiced and for opposition to the unpopular policies of the government.

Technically, elections represent electorate's participation in the decision-making and by-elections provide the citizens with the opportunity to withdraw or conform support for the political leadership in power. But these periodic opportunities did not make much impact as instruments of participation in decision making due to the oppressive policies of the government, represented for instance, by

18 Alex Josey, n.12, p.52.

19 Shee Poon Kim, "The Evolution of the Political System", In Jon S. T. Quah and others, n.9, p.12.

frequent recourse to Internal Security Act through which important opposition leaders were arrested. In this sense, the election result had always been a forgone conclusion. It was said that due to the numbering of ballot papers, the government could know who voted against the ruling party.\textsuperscript{21} The people were apprehensive that voting against the ruling party would damage their career prospects. Since the voting was compulsory the people were forced to vote for the PAP. And also the opposition parties were not given sufficient time for campaigning. They were given only nine days, the minimum time provided by the electoral rules of the government.

According to the Singapore Constitution, all the ministers were individually and collectively responsible to the Parliament for every act and neglect of their departments.\textsuperscript{22} This could be considered potential safeguard against the tyranny of the executive. In case of corruption, gross negligence and mismanagement of the public funds, the Parliament might censure the concerned minister and force him to resign. But in a one-party Parliament, ministerial responsibility was difficult to enforce since there was no opposition to raise the issues of maladministration. The


\textsuperscript{22} Singapore, Singapore, 1994, (Singapore, Ministry of Information and Arts, 1994), p.36.
government preferred to deal with such issues through internal methods than to discuss the matters in an open debate. The members were obliged to follow the wishes of their party rather than voting according to their conscience to maintain party solidarity and discipline.

Due to the absence of opposition members in the Parliament, there was no check on the stringent policies of the government. Therefore, unlike other democratic governments, in Singapore, the supremacy of the executive prevailed over the legislature. In December 1965, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew declared in the Parliament that "Singapore had inherited the tendency for too great a concentration of power in the hands of the executive and needed to liberalise the Constitution and make the weight of the executive authority less inhibitive to the legislature and to the judiciary." 23 But no such changes were made. The supremacy of the executive was evident from some of the bills passed by the Parliament. The Employment and Industrial Relations Act imposed some restrictions on workers' rights, particularly the right to strike and negotiate for bonuses. 24 It also permitted longer working hours, reduced holidays and gave the employers more powers for hiring, transferring and promoting workers. This bill was politically controversial. On one hand, it gave sick leave and unemployment compensation

23 Turnbull, n.20, p.319.
24 Le Poer, n.7, p.59.
to workers, on the other hand, it sought to cut fringe benefits, overtime pay and retirement benefits and to enforce strict discipline on labour. The bill was initiated due to British announcement to withdraw its bases in Singapore. British spending in Singapore accounted for twenty eight per cent of its GNP. The British withdrawal would pose security and economic threats to Singapore. Therefore to make up for it, the government felt the need for a tough legislation to attract foreign investments. The government justified this act by saying that economic survival of the country required a disciplined labour movement. The price for progress was paid by the labour.

Surprisingly, there was no opposition to the bill. Inspite of its controversial nature, the bill was not sent to the Select Committee to which objections could be put forward by the media and other organizations. This was a clear cut case of the government’s authoritarian nature and neglect of public opinion.

Another bill of this kind was the Abortion Bill enacted in 1968. The Abortion Bill, legalised abortions in cases where mother’s economic and social conditions were low. The medical and humanitarian grounds were completely ignored. The

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27 Chan Heng Chee, n.17, p.27.
strongest opposition came from catholic members of Parliament who opposed the bill on religious grounds since they felt the bill went against the right to life.\(^{28}\) The bill was also contrary to the principle of equality stipulated by the constitution. The bill got ten negative votes, two abstentions and fourteen members including the Prime Minister being absent from the house. The bill was sent to the Select Committee where only one member opposed it. Out of twenty-nine written representations to the Select Committee, twenty-two opposed the bill. Inspite of this, the Select Committee returned the bill to the Parliament recommending some minor changes and the bill was passed by thirty-two votes to ten negative votes, one abstention and fifteen members being absent from the House.\(^{29}\) This was a clear cut case of supremacy of the executive over the legislature.

In 1974 the Newspaper and Printing Press Act was passed imposing certain restrictions on newspapers.\(^{30}\) But it could not be challenged in the Parliament because it was related to the security and unity of the country.

From the above cases it is evident that the will of the executive prevailed over that of legislature. It was a deficiency in a Parliamentary democracy.

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\(^{28}\) Singapore Legislative Assembly, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 28, 8 April 1969, cited in Chan Heng Chee, n.9, p.79.


\(^{30}\) Tremewan, n.25, p.197.

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Judiciary was the third important organ of the Singapore government. Supreme Court was the apex court consisting of Chief Justice and other judges. It protected and safeguarded the sovereignty of the constitution. Judiciary administered law independently of the executive. The independence of the Judiciary was safeguarded by some special provisions of the constitution. A judge of the Supreme Court could not be removed except in accordance with the provision of the constitution. A Supreme Court judge could be removed only on the grounds of misbehaviour or of inability which must be clarified by an independent tribunal. The judges were paid their salaries from consolidated fund. The remuneration and other terms of the office of a judge could not be altered to his disadvantage after his appointment. According to Article 52(F) of the constitution, the conduct of a judge of the Supreme Court shall not be discussed in Parliament except on a substantive motion supported by not less than one quarter of the total number of members of Parliament. These provisions were to safeguard the judiciary from the interference of the executive. But Singapore judiciary's lack of independence began with its structure. "By granting short term appointments that may or may not be renewed at government's discretion, the Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew has ensured that fully half of the

31 Singapore Constitution, n.1, p.1066.
32 Singapore Constitution, Article, Part II 52(F), n.1, p.36.
twelve judges on Singapore Supreme Court are kept on a short leash". Three of these judges have been named judicial commissioners and were given one or two years probationary term during which the government can review a new judge's ruling before entrusting him with full tenure.

Fundamental liberties were taken from the Malaysian Constitution. Fundamental liberties are the *sine qua non* of democracy. They were meant to safeguard the people against unpopular laws and tyrannical rule of the executive. Part II Article 5 to 12 of the Singapore constitution contained fundamental liberties. They were, right to liberty of the person, prohibition of slavery and forced labour, right to equality, prohibition of banishment, freedom of movement, freedom of speech, assembly and association, freedom of religion and rights in respect of education.

But the government infringed the fundemental rights time and again by using other legislative enactments like criminal law (Temporary Provisions) Act, Internal Security Act, Procedure for Deprivation of Citizenship etc. Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act provided that "the relevant minister, if satisfied that some person associated with activities of a criminal nature, may with the consent of the public prosecutor, detain the person for a maximum period of one year." The period could be renewed if necessary.34

33 Tremewan, n.25, p.193.
34 Ibid, 200.
Under the Internal Security Act, any political suspect could be arrested and detained without trial for an indefinite period without any reason being given. The case could be reviewed by an advisory board consisting of three members who were government nominees and their job was strictly advisory. The Internal Affairs Minister’s decision was final and could not be questioned in any court. It was not necessary for him to disclose the facts which he thought were against national interests. This outrightly infringed the fundamental liberty of the person. Part II Article 5 of the constitution noted that when a person was arrested he should be allowed to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice. Article 5(4) said that when a person was arrested within twenty four hours he shall be produced before the magistrate and shall not be detained without magistrate’s authority. But Internal Security Act negated this article of the constitution.

In most cases the government did not even refer to the advisory board, occasionally the prisoners were freed and they were asked to appear on the T.V or otherwise to give wide publicity to their recantation. They had to memorise replies for their interviews. Lim Chin Siong after spending nine years in prison sent a letter stating his "loss of faith in

The treatment of political prisoners included physical and mental torture. The government used methods like solitary confinement, darkhole treatment, third degree methods and even use of drugs to discipline a person. These methods continued until the persons were broken down and tried to commit suicide. Lim Chin Siong also attempted suicide. T.J.S. George gave an account of details given by political prisoners of a specially constructed electronically equipped prison, the Moon Crescent Centre. It had a staff specially trained in producing mental breakdown in political prisoners. Except biscuits, no other food stuff was allowed. No writing material was allowed. No doctors were allowed. Visitors could see only through sound proof glasses and converse through telephone. The conversation should be only on personal matters, otherwise the telephone line was cut and visits might be suspended. One of the prisoners recounted that each of them was kept in a box like cell without window and the front closed by a bar so that they could not even see each other. They were released only for five hours of forced labour. ISA physically removed those citizen from the society, who refused to conform to the government’s policies. And also it had a profound ideological affect on others who

38 Ibid., p.122.
might have contemplated similar dissenting behaviour.

Attempts at judicial review of detention were consistently blocked. Defence lawyers who permitted, were themselves imprisoned in order to intimidate the legal profession as a whole. An English barrister, Mr. Anthony Lester Q.C. forced the government to amend the constitution in order to avoid judicial review and was subsequently barred from practising in Singapore. In 1971 one lawyer who sought judicial review of detainees held under criminal law (Temporary Provisions) Act was also detained under the act himself. Detainees who initiated legal action were imprisoned for larger periods as retribution.

According to the Amnesty International Report "from 1963 to early 1970s the number of political prisoners in Singapore fluctuated between a maximum of 250 and a minimum of 20. In few years 1963-1965, arrests far exceeded releases...". The government used this law to eliminate opposition. Most of the opposition leaders were arrested and detained under ISA. Lim Hock Siew, the secretary general of Barisan Sosialis was arrested in 1963 and was kept in Moon Crescent

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40 Tremewan, n.25, p.204.
42 Guardian Weekly, (Manchester), 10 April, 1947.
Centre. He had been told that his requests to see a lawyer would not be approved until he gave an undertaking that he would not mention anything about the treatment he was receiving. The PAP used the detention for consolidation of its political position. Arrests of many opposition members, journalists and trade unionists in 1966 made it easier for PAP to win all the seats in the 1968 elections and the passage of anti-labour legislations. In 1970, more trade unionists were arrested. In 1971, in preparation for the 1972 general elections, the main editorial staff of the Chinese newspaper Nanyang Siang Pau were arrested and detained under ISA.\(^\text{43}\)

The government’s justification for retaining the ISA was that this law was meant to contain subversion and maintain internal security. Around twenty members of a secret organisation, ‘The People’s Revolutionary Party of Singapore’ alleged to have been supported by Indonesia to smuggle weapons into the island to assassinate the cabinet ministers and prominent members of the police had been arrested and detained.\(^\text{44}\) These groups were alleged to have been ordered to distribute pamphlets to create antagonism between Malays and Chinese. The government tried all means to instil fear among the people of the consequences of being under communist influence. In Nanyang University, the government expelled and

\(^{43}\) Tremewan, n.25, p.204.

arrested students associated with the communist organizations. Lee Kuan Yew banned the Socialist club’s famous journal *Fajar* which he himself prevented from being banned during the struggle for independence.\(^{45}\) The foreign correspondents had to be registered by the government before they could become residents. The correspondents who were not acquiescent to Lee Kuan Yew did not get their resident permits renewed.

It was impossible to find out the true number of detainees under ISA. Sometimes the government did not announce their names. The detainees were seldom released. Those released were forced to live under stringent conditions. A person released after being arrested under ISA could be confined to his residence, restricted to a particular employment, prohibited from going out of town at specific times, directed to notify his movements to the police, banned from joining any organization and from travelling abroad.\(^{46}\)

Sometimes, he might lose his citizenship. Once he lost his citizenship, he might be confronted with various problems. His employment might be subjected to renewable work permits, the schooling of his children would be five times more expensive, travelling might be out of bounds for him. He might be deprived of all the advantages of being a citizen. He might be treated worse than a criminal. He was not even charged in the court and tried. He was obliged to join ex-

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\(^{45}\) George, n.37, pp.34-35.

\(^{46}\) Ibid, p.119.
detainees association and his case could be reviewed annually by the review board. He was constantly under pressure by the government.

In universities, students were discouraged from participating in politics. No boy or girl could enter a university in Singapore without suitability certificate from the government. The issuance of suitability certificate had nothing to do with the person's educational qualifications. Decision on issuance of the certificates was taken not by the educational authorities but by the department dealing with internal Security. This was meant to keep the communists from entering into educational institutions. The PAP government used all possible means to eliminate the opposition. Since a political career would be impossible by joining opposition parties, the number of people joining the opposition parties essened. Consequently, the opposition political parties could not recruit sufficient number of candidates for election. Thus one party rule flourished.

The government imposed restrictions even on press. The press plays an important role in a democracy by representing the people's interests and criticising the unpopular policies of the government. In Singapore, where there were no opposition parties in the Parliament, the press could have played the role of opposition by representing the masses and putting forward their views but stringent policies of the

Ibid, p.133.
government suppressed freedom of press. Besides the power to detain subversive elements, the Minister of Internal Security was also empowered to "prohibit the printing, publication, sale, issue, circulation or possession of a document or publication deemed prejudicial to the national interest, public order or security of Singapore." 48 This very clearly placed restrictions upon the area of political issues that were open to public discussion. In May 1971, three major newspapers, The Singapore Herald, The Eastern Sun and Nanyang Siang Pau were alleged by the government to have been involved in subversive activities and were closed down. In May 1971, Lee Kuan Yew accused the Singapore Herald Tribune of being hostile to the government and eroding the attitude of the people regarding certain issues of fundamental rights, ISA, etc. 49 Initially its foreign staff members were expelled and Manhattan Bank was forced to foreclose its loans. But "Save The Herald" campaign by the people tripled its circulation. 50 The government cancelled its printing licenses without giving any reasons and the paper closed down.

In May 1971, English language daily The Eastern Sun ceased its publication after its managing director was accused of accepting funds from Communist Intelligence agents. Its

48 Chan Heng Chee, n.17, p.203.
50 Turnbull, n.20, p.322.
editorial staff resigned and the paper was closed. A popular Chinese newspaper, Nanyang Siang Pau was accused of stirring up Chinese racial feelings and adopting pro-communist line. Four executives of the newspaper were accused and detained under ISA. With effect from 1974, the permits for newspapers published in Singapore and those distributed from Malaysia were subjected to new controls. The new rules prohibited publication of any article likely to cause ill will or misunderstanding between the people and the government or likely to cause communal or racial emotions or designed to justify the use of violence in politics. This newspaper and printing press bill was enacted in 1974 to ensure that the newspapers would be managed and owned by Singapore citizens and Minister for culture would be entrusted with special powers of supervision over press and newspaper companies.\(^5\)

The government also expressed the intention of setting up a press council consisting of government and local press representatives who would lay editorial guidelines and scrutinize key staff appointments to prevent foreign powers from subverting the country through its newspapers.\(^5\) Though the controversial bill was sent to the Select Committee which received eight representations, only minor amendments were


\(^5\) Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 7-13 January 1974, p.26282.
made. In the Parliament, only two members expressed reservation on the consequences of such a bill such as stifling of healthy debate on important national and international issues in the mass media. No one opposed the bill. The freedom of press was considered less important than discipline and maintenance of a stable society. Lee Kuan Yew stated that freedom of press "must be subordinated to the overriding needs of the integrity of Singapore and to the primacy of the purpose of elected government". The decision of security issues was accepted as prerogative of the leadership. Since the issue of press was linked to that of security, the members of Parliament as a matter of routine endorsed government's policies.

On 16 June 1976 two Malay journalists and editor of a Singapore daily Berata Harian (Daily News) were arrested on charges of steering discontent among the Singapore Malays and influencing them towards communism. Its editor was arrested for alleged direct involvement in activities in support of communist struggle for power. In January 1971 Singapore Correspondent of Far Eastern Economic Review was arrested on charges relating to possession and dissemination of sensitive information.

Though the government claimed that the purpose of this act was to suppress subversive activities and promote multi-

\[53\] Chan Heng Chee, n.9, p.80.

\[54\] Straits Times, 22 May 1987.
racialism, it was used against all the newspapers that criticised the government. This indicated suppression of freedom of expression and intolerance of the government to any kind of opposition.

Another act misused by the government to eliminate opposition was the Societies Act. The Societies Act inherited from the British colonial administration, criminalised all political organizations which were not subject to direct government control. Under this Act any group or association of ten or more persons must be registered under the Societies Act. For registration, information must be supplied concerning the aims, the constitution and rules of the society and the names and background of office holders. The Registrar of Societies might request more information, and the society would be refused registration if the Registrar was satisfied that "the rules of the society are (were) insufficient for proper management and control or it would be contrary to the national interest for the society to be registered." Registration might be refused if it appeared to the Registrar that the name of the society to be registered was likely to mislead the members of the public as to the true character and purpose. The Registrar was not required to give reasons while rejecting an application. Even a registered organization required Registrar's permission to establish branches, to change its name and to amend any rules.

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55 Tremewan, n.25, p.195.

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The Minister of Home Affairs could deregister and dissolve any registered society if he was satisfied that it was being used for unlawful purposes or purposes incompatible with its objectives and rules or it was a political organization with a connection with any other organization outside Singapore.

This Act was most used during the 1960s and 1970s when the PAP was consolidating its political hegemony. This Act legally enabled PAP to monitor the internal affairs of any rival party. The government justified all these oppressive policy measures on the grounds of maintaining political stability, economic development and communal harmony.

The Constitution of Singapore endorsed the policy of multi-racialism. It did not discriminate people on the basis of race and religion, etc. In 1966, a Constitutional Commission headed by the Chief Justice and comprising lawyers of different racial and religious communities came up to devise safeguards to prevent discrimination against racial, religious or linguistic minorities. The Commission recommended certain safeguards to avert the "potential tyranny of the Parliament" monopolised by one party which would overrun the constitution itself by a simple majority. The Commission recommended the creation of a Council of States which would be an apolitical body to draw attention to the

56 Ibid, p.196.
57 Turnbull, n.16, p.318.
proposed legislation which threatened the minorities. It also recommended for the creation of an independent Ombudsman to deal with the faults in the administration.\textsuperscript{58} It also suggested that the basic tenets of the Constitution could not be altered unless the bill was supported by two-thirds majority in the Parliament and also confirmed by two-thirds of a majority in a referendum. The government accepted some of these proposals.\textsuperscript{59} It rejected the suggestion for a referendum and opted for the safeguard of two-thirds of the Parliamentary majority. The government agreed to establish an Advisory Council consisting of some leading politicians. Obviously, the executive did not recognize the need for a check on the legislature.

Thus in 1969, the Presidential Council for minority rights came into being. It consisted of a chairman and ten permanent members including the PAP leader Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew himself. Its function was to draw attention to any bills or subsidiary "legislations which in its opinion was likely in its practical application to be advantageous to persons of any racial or religious community and not equally advantageous to any such community."\textsuperscript{60} But the role of the


presidential council was strictly "advisory". Its suggestion "may or may not lead to amendments". The influence of the executive rendered the Council less effective. It was completely left to the discretion of the government which legislation should be referred to the Council and whether to accept or not to accept its suggestions. Its role was merely to make the government conscious of the discriminatory provisions if any in the legislation. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was opposed to the proposal that the Council meeting should be held in public. The Council had no veto power. So was diminished the supremacy of the Parliament.

The government took several other measures to make the policy of multiracialism viable. The government's policy relating to integrative process can be seen by the government's policies like integrative schools, housing policy, language policy and compulsory military training. Integrated schools and public housing were the policies used by the government to ensure intermixing of various ethnic groups. In schools the children had to study their mother tongue or any other language besides English. English education was preferred for careers in business, industry and government. The Housing Development Board provided low cost

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62 Turnbull, n.16, p.319.
63 Singapore Legislative Assembly, Commission of Inquiry into Education: A Report cmd 8 of 1964.
housing. Its apartments were allotted to people of all ethnic groups in number that reflected the multiracial population of the country.  

Another method of integration relating to language was that even in Parliament all four languages were used. Most of the members of the Parliament were bilingual or multi-lingual. The compulsory National Service also played an important role in the integrative process. All male Singapore citizens aged eighteen and above were required to serve a period of two or two and a half years' full time national service. By bringing people of different racial, religious and educational backgrounds to train and live together, it has also contributed to a sense of identity and unity among Singapore citizens.

Due to the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversities, a single Singaporean national identity was not easy to emerge. It had to be consciously built by government’s policies and directions. The government tried to acquire Singaporean identity and emphasized discipline and necessity of building a "rugged society". All newspapers that tried to stir racial feelings were severely dealt with. In this process many opposition leaders were arrested and newspapers closed down.

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Bureaucracy played a significant role in Singapore polity. Because there was no opposition, significance of election lessened. There was no need for political skill to attract the masses for votes. Efficiency and hardwork were emphasised. More emphasis was put on economic development than on politics. Therefore importance of the politician got reduced as bureaucracy became more important due to its efficiency and incorruptibility. Thus Singapore became more of an "administrative state" than a democracy.67

The government sought to maintain communication with the people and to channelise the activities of the people to prevent any kind of rebellious tendencies. The government established grass-root organisations like citizens' Consultative Committees, People's Associations and Resident Committees to encourage popular participation in social, cultural, educational and recreational activities.68 The PAP made use of these grass-root organizations to mobilise public support for the party which had become synonymous with the government through its long uninterrupted rule. The popular participation and mobilization was controlled since the members of Parliament were virtually PAP members. Instead of giving way to free flow of public opinion and encouraging


people's participation in politics, the government itself channelised its opinion to the people and made them participate the way it wanted through grass-root leaders. The grass-root organizations were either apolitical in nature or controlled by the PAP leaders and acted as a link between PAP and the people.\textsuperscript{69}

The grass-root organizations did not promote the political participation of the people. On the other hand they emphasised the dominance of the PAP by involving more people in the activities designed by the party. They sought to absorb the participatory talents of the people directing them to different aspects of government's social political and developmental programmes.\textsuperscript{70} They were merely instruments for communicating the ideas of the government to the people and people's grievances to the government.

Hence it was apparent that though the constitution declares Singapore a democratic state, the essential features of democracy such as freedom of speech, free and fair elections and powerful opposition were absent.

Evidently, there was some authoritarian streak in Singapore Constitution. In a country where different racial groups live together dominated by a majority race, it is


\textsuperscript{70} George, n.37, p.185.
natural for the other groups to feel discriminated and dominated. In Singapore both Malays and Chinese had strong ties with their home countries and cultures. Therefore it was necessary to contain the communal forces to maintain the unity of the country. ISA and Printing Press Act were used for this purpose. When it became independent, Singapore was facing severe housing and unemployment problem. To solve unemployment problem industrialisation was necessary. The Housing and Development Board not only provided housing but also performed integrative functions. The Employment and Industrialization Act was strictly enforced and Singapore achieved development in a very short time. Economic development was given priority over politics.

Lee Kuan Yew, however, felt that western concept of democracy was not suitable for developing countries. He suggested that citizens of the developing countries "have to sacrifice some rights for the sake of development".\(^{71}\)

Singapore constitution gave fundamental liberties but they were stifled by ISA.\(^{72}\) Political parties were not banned but were made ineffective. The main reason behind making cabinet responsible to the Parliament was to fulfil the requirement of Parliamentary democracy. It could not be implemented due to absence of opposition in the Parliament.

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71 Cited in New Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur), 26 May 1977.
72 Guardian Weekly 10 April 1977.

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The accountability of the cabinet to the Parliament which was the very essence of the Parliamentary system was also absent. Inspite of all its economic achievements, Singapore could not be called a successful democracy. It was simply due to the denial of political freedom to its citizens.