International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under Article 9 of the Convention

Initial reports of States Parties due in 2018

Singapore

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Foreword

At the announcement of Singapore's independence on 9 August 1965, our founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew said, "We are going to be a multi-racial nation in Singapore. We will set an example. This is not a Malay nation; this is not a Chinese nation; this is not an Indian nation. Everyone will have his place, equal: language, culture, religion."

Mr Lee said this to assure the minority races in Singapore that their rights would always be protected, and to remind the Chinese majority that the non-Chinese were their co-equals as citizens. This principle of multi-racialism was founded on the ideals of justice and equality for all, and promised that no one would be disadvantaged because of the colour of his or her skin. This principle was fundamental to why we decided and strove against all odds, to become an independent nation. This principle also underpins our safety and security. A year before our independence, on 21 July 1964, racial riots between the Chinese and Malays erupted; many died and even more were hurt, and fear engulfed the island. Today, we commemorate this annually on Racial Harmony Day, so that we do not forget the dire consequences if we fail to uphold race relations and foster solidarity in our diverse society.

Racial harmony in Singapore did not come about by chance. People naturally keep to those who are the same race as them. We thus put in place social policies that strengthened social cohesion and built trust over time. With unwavering determination, our founding fathers sought to forge unity from disparate racial communities. Generations thereafter have taken over the mantle. This effort of harnessing strength from diversity has become core to our national identity.

Our racial harmony is anchored on the secular state, multi-racialism and meritocracy. Government policies are made in the best interest of every Singaporean, and even-handed in the treatment of all. Our strong legal framework deters anyone from causing racial or religious conflict. In upholding the principle of meritocracy, we nurture a society that seeks to provide equal opportunities for all.

Singapore fosters harmonious interactions between racial groups by expanding the common space for all to live, work and play together. Through our housing and education policies, racial groups interact daily, share common experiences, and appreciate how our differences mean we all have something unique to contribute to the common good. Our various communities and their leaders are committed to building mutual trust and strengthening social harmony. The Government also supports and promotes activities where all come together to celebrate our cultural diversity, because it is through such shared experiences and memories that we become one people.

Singaporeans understand how precious racial harmony is, and that we must work unceasingly to safeguard and strengthen it. Singapore signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) on 19 October 2015, in the 50th year of our founding as a nation, and ratified it on 27 November 2017.

Grace Fu
Minister for Culture, Community and Youth

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AMLA	Administration of Muslim Law Act
BRIDGE	Broadening Religious/Racial Interaction through Dialogue and General Education
CPF	Central Provident Fund
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CIF	Community Integration Fund
CEA	Council for Estate Agencies
Yayasan MENDAKI	Council for the Development of Singapore Malay/Muslim Community
DOS	Department of Statistics
EIP	Ethnic Integration Policy
FAS	Financial Assistance Scheme
FAST	Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training
GHS	General Household Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GNP	Gross National Product
GRC	Group Representation Constituency
HELP	Helping to Empower Litigants-in-Person
HDB	Housing & Development Board
HDR	Human Development Report
IRO	Inter Religious Organisation, Singapore
IMC-ICERD	Inter-Ministry Committee on the ICERD
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
IRCC	Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle
MP	Member of Parliament
MCCY	Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOM	Ministry of Manpower
MUIS	Islamic Religious Council of Singapore
NIC	National Integration Council
NTUC	National Trades Union Congress
NMP	Nominated Member of Parliament
NCMP	Non-Constituency Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OPSG	OnePeople.sg
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	People's Association
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
SAF	Singapore Armed Forces
SPF	Singapore Police Force
SMC	Single Member Constituency
SAP	Special Assistance Plan
TAFEP	Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices

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UN	United Nations
US	United States

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PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1   This Report constitutes the initial report of Singapore pursuant to Article 9 of the ICERD.

1.2   From its inception, Singapore has been a multi-cultural society, built and sustained by locals and immigrants of different races who consider Singapore their home. Our vision is one of a caring and cohesive society and one united people, and the Government places critical importance on protecting and strengthening social cohesion and multi-racial harmony. In this regard, ratifying the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) underscores the Government's unwavering commitment to work towards a society free from racial discrimination.

1.3   The Government has made significant investments in the key social pillars of housing, healthcare and education to meet the needs and aspirations of Singaporeans.

1.4   At the same time, we are committed to strengthening our social cohesion through policies and programmes that treat all Singaporeans equally, regardless of their race and religion.

1.5   Singapore received a good review at our second Universal Periodic Review in 2016, with many States affirming Singapore's track record, social policies and pragmatic approach to human rights, including the fostering of social harmony and racial and religious tolerance. The Government's approach to preserving and strengthening social cohesion is anchored on three pillars: legislative safeguards for racial and religious harmony; policies that foster social integration; and programmes that mobilise the community to build mutual respect and understanding, and to work together for the common good. These include the following:

Presidential Council for Minority Rights[1]
The Constitution provides for a Presidential Council for Minority Rights, which serves as a safeguard against the Government implementing discriminatory laws. The Council does this by scrutinising bills passed or subsidiary legislation published to ensure that they are not disadvantageous to any racial or religious community relative to other such communities, and by reporting any discriminatory provisions of the bill or subsidiary legislation to Parliament so that the bill or subsidiary legislation would be reconsidered.

Group Representation Constituency[2]
Our electoral system, the Group Representation Constituency (GRC), ensures that Parliament will always be multi-racial in its composition. The GRC system, where electoral divisions are represented by three to six Members of Parliament, ensures that ethnic minorities are included in any given slate of candidates.

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[1] See Part I paragraphs [3.32 to 3.33] of this Report.
[2] See Part I paragraph [3.25]; Part II paragraphs [3.33 to 3.35] of this Report.

<u>Ethnic Integration Policy</u>[3]
Since 1989, the Government has implemented an Ethnic Integration Policy for public housing, which puts in place ethnic quotas for each neighbourhood and apartment block. Through this, each neighbourhood mirrors the ethnic composition of the national population, hence preventing the formation of ethnic enclaves and possible associated problems. This also provides residents with the opportunity to interact and build relationships with fellow Singaporeans of different races in their daily routines, growing bonds across races and religions.

<u>Self-Help Groups</u>[4]
Five ethnic-based Self-Help Groups provide assistance to low-income persons/families. These Groups, which are funded through voluntary contributions from the community and financial grants from the Government, help to provide community-based assistance that complements national schemes.

<u>Community Programmes</u>[5]
At the community level, there are several programmes in place to strengthen friendly interactions and foster social cohesion. A wide variety of Grassroots Organisations, led by the People's Association, provide opportunities for social interactions on the ground through a wide range of programmes that promote positive community relations among people from all walks of life. The Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles complement this by bringing together leaders from different racial and religious community groups to build friendship and trust through inter-ethnic and inter-faith themed activities. To strengthen Singapore's social cohesion further, the Government launched BRIDGE in 2017. BRIDGE comprises a series of community-driven initiatives to foster a better understanding and appreciation of the diverse religions and races in Singapore. These initiatives are driven by community partners who provide safe spaces and opportunities for dialogue and mutual learning, and supported by the Government.

1.6   More details are included in this Report, which starts with general information about Singapore in Part I. Part II then provides information on Articles 1 to 7 of the Convention, highlighting the measures we have taken to address our obligations in these Articles. As we continue on this journey, every generation must uphold the ideal of a just and equal society in Singapore, regardless of race, language or religion.[6]

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[3] See Part II paragraphs [4.2 to 4.5] of this Report.
[4] See Part II paragraphs [3.45 to 3.46] of this Report.
[5] See Part II paragraphs [3.20 to 3.21 and 8.18 to 8.20] of this Report.
[6] The phrase "regardless of race, language or religion" is expressed in Singapore's national pledge.

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2   INTRODUCTION

2.1   To build a cohesive Singapore society, the Government is committed to the principles of the Convention to address racial discrimination. While the Convention is not automatically part of domestic law, it is given effect through a comprehensive suite of existing legislation, policies and other measures implemented.

2.2   Singapore takes a multi-stakeholder approach to the implementation of the Convention, with the understanding that every party plays a role in pursuing the goal of addressing racial discrimination. In line with this, this Report has taken into account the views and feedback of civil society. During the process, the Government has engaged and consulted various segments of our population, such as religious and community leaders, academics, youths, as well as community and civil society organisations, all of whom have a role to play in pursuing the goal of eliminating racial discrimination in Singapore.

3   GENERAL INFORMATION ON SINGAPORE[7]

A. Demographic, Economic, Social and Cultural Characteristics of Singapore

Demographic characteristics

Population size, age, gender

3.1   Singapore has a resident population of 3.44 million Singaporeans, 0.53 million permanent residents and 1.65 million non-residents, bringing Singapore's total population to 5.61 million as at end-June 2017.

3.2   The total resident and citizen population growth for 2017 were 0.8% and 0.9% respectively.

3.3   As at end-June 2017, the median age of the resident population rose to 40.5 years, continuing the upward trend observed over the years (Figure 1 of the Annex).[8] Residents[9] aged 65 years and over formed 13% of the resident population in 2017, a rise from 12.4% in 2016.

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[7] The domestic data cited within this report is largely from the Singapore Department of Statistics (DOS), which develops and maintains a national statistical system, providing statistics to support Singapore's social and economic development. One of the main populations data collected by DOS is census data, with the first post-independence census collected in 1970 and every 10 years thereafter. The most recent collection was in 2010. Singapore also collects a mid-decade mini-census, the General Household Survey (GHS), the first of which was collected in 1995 and the most recent collection was in 2015. Labour force data is based on mid-year Labour Force Surveys conducted by the Ministry of Manpower yearly, except for years when Census and GHS data is collected.

[8] Department of Statistics, Population Trends 2017.

[9] Residents refers to Singaporeans and permanent residents.

3.4   As at end-June 2017, females outnumbered males. The male-female ratio among residents was 961 males per 1,000 females (Figure 2 of the Annex).[10]

Race, religious affiliation and language

3.5   Singapore's population is made up largely of descendants of immigrants from the Malay Peninsula, China, India and Sri Lanka. Our people still retain many of their traditional ethnic practices, customs and festivals while subscribing to an overarching Singaporean identity.

3.6   As at end-June 2017, of the resident population, 74.3% are Chinese, 13.4% are Malay, 9% are Indian and 3.2% are from other ethnic groups (Figure 3 of the Annex).[11]

3.7   According to a study of more than 200 countries by the Pew Research Centre (2014), Singapore scored the highest on its Religious Diversity Index.[12] Based on the General Household Survey 2015 of the resident population aged 15 years and above, 33.2% were Buddhist, 18.8% Christian (6.7% Catholic), 14% Muslim, 10% Taoist, 5% Hindu, 0.4% Sikh, and 0.2% from other religions. 18.5% professed to have no religion.[13]

3.8   With respect to the racial profile of religious groups, based on the General Household Survey 2015,[14] 83.9 % of Muslims were Malays, 85.4 % of Christians were Chinese, 97.9% of Buddhists were Chinese, and 99.5 % of Hindus were Indians. With respect to the religious profile of racial groups, 99.2 % of Malays were Muslims, 59.9 % of Indians were Hindus, and among the Chinese, 42.3 % were Buddhists and 20.9 % were Christians.

3.9   Singapore has four official languages, Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English.[15] This helps to preserve the languages of the main ethnic groups, while the common language, English, facilitates inter-ethnic interaction and communication. Malay is the national language while English is the language of administration. A fundamental feature of Singapore's education system is its bilingual policy that ensures that each child learns both English and his/her mother tongue, so as to maintain an awareness of his/her cultural heritage while acquiring the skills to thrive in a modern, industrialized economy.

Urban population and life expectancy

3.10   79.9% of Singapore's residents live in high-rise public housing. The rest of the population lives mainly in private housing estates. Population density rose from 4,814 persons per square kilometre in 1990 to 7,796 persons per square kilometre in 2017, one of the highest in the world.[16]

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[10] Department of Statistics, Population Trends 2017.
[11] Department of Statistics, Population Trends 2017.
[12] www.pewforum.org/2014/04/04/global-religious-diversity/
[13] General Household Survey 2015.
[14] Of the resident population over the age of 15.
[15] See Article 153 of the Constitution.
[16] Department of Statistics, Population Trends 2017.

3.11 Life expectancy at birth has steadily improved from 75 years in 1989 to 77.6 years in 1999, to 82.9 years for Singapore's resident population in 2016. Females live longer than males and have a life expectancy of 85.1 years compared to 80.6 years for males, in 2016. Singaporeans also have the second longest healthy life expectancy at birth in the world, based on the World Health Organisation's Health Statistics (2016).[17]

Socio-economic indicators

3.12 Singapore has few natural resources. Great importance is hence placed on developing all its people, who are Singapore's most precious asset. The Government is mindful that policies and programmes should be inclusive of people from different racial and religious backgrounds.

Standard of living and national income

3.13 The United Nations' Human Development Report (HDR) 2015 ranked Singapore 5th out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index,[18] up from 27th out of 169 countries in the 2010 Report. This reflects an overall improvement in the standard of living in the areas of life expectancy, educational attainment and real income.

3.14 According to the HDR 2015, Singapore's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (2011 PPP $) was $78,162, which ranked 2nd out of 188 countries.[19] In 2016, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current market prices was S$410,272 million while per capita GDP at current market prices was S$73,167. Singapore's economy continues to do well, with a real growth rate of 2% in 2016.[20]

Rate of inflation

3.15 The five-year average for the change in Consumer Price Index, which measures the price changes over time of a fixed basket of goods and services commonly consumed by households, was 1.4% per annum from 2012 to 2016, down from 3% per annum from 2007 to 2011.

Labour force participation and unemployment

3.16 Singapore's resident labour force comprised 2.3 million people in 2017. The resident labour force participation rate was 67.7%, up from 63.3% in 2004. The annual average resident unemployment rate for 2017 was 3.1% and is on a general declining trend from 4.4% in 2004.

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[17] Department of Statistics, Population Trends 2017.
[18] The Human Development Index ranks each country according to a score on a composite index integrating per capita Gross National Product (GNP), life expectancy, literacy and educational levels.
[19] Human Development Report 2015.
[20] Department of Statistics, Yearbook of Statistics 2017.

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<u>Literacy and Educational Outcomes</u>

3.17   Singapore has a strong education system, which did well in rankings by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment Survey (2015). Singapore's local universities, the National University of Singapore and the Nanyang Technological University, were ranked 11th and 12th in the world respectively, and 1st and 2nd in Asia, by Quacquarelli Symonds' World University Rankings (2018).[21]

3.18   Literacy rate among residents in 2016 was 97%. In 2016, among the resident population aged 25 years and over, the percentage with at least post-secondary qualifications was 52.8% (Figure 4 in the Annex). This was an increase from 36.7% a decade prior in 2006.[22]

3.19   The increase was largely due to the higher proportion of university graduates that rose from 19.6% in 2005 to 29.1% in 2016. Similarly, there was also a higher proportion of those who have diploma & professional qualifications at 14.7% in 2016, compared to 10.8% in 2006.[23]

B. Singapore's Constitutional, Political and Legal Structure

<u>Background on Singapore's political system and government</u>

3.20   After nearly 140 years of British colonial rule from 1819 to 1959 (except during the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945), Singapore was granted self-government in 1959. On 16 September 1963, Singapore merged with the Federation of Malaya, Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah) to form the Federation of Malaysia. However, the merger was dissolved and Singapore became a fully independent and sovereign nation upon separation from Malaysia on 9 August 1965. On 21 September 1965, Singapore became a Member State of the United Nations (UN), with Mr Yusof bin Ishak elected by Parliament as the first President of the Republic of Singapore.

3.21   Singapore is a republic with a parliamentary system of government. The Constitution provides for the three main branches of government: The Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.

<u>The Executive</u>

3.22   Executive authority is vested in the President and is exercisable by the President (the Head of State) or the Cabinet. The administration of the Government is vested in the Cabinet, comprising the Prime Minister and other Ministers. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President as the Member of Parliament (MP) who commands the confidence of the majority of the MPs. Ministers are appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister and are selected from among the MPs.

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[21] www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/nus-is-back-on-top-as-asia-no-1-university.
[22] Department of Statistics, Population Trends 2017.
[23] Department of Statistics, Population Trends 2017.

3.23   The Cabinet is responsible for all Government policies and the day-to-day administration of the affairs of the state. It is responsible collectively to Parliament and comprises the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, and the Ministers in charge of the ministries of Communications and Information, Culture, Community and Youth, Defence, Education, the Environment and Water Resources, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Health, Home Affairs, Law, Manpower, National Development, Social and Family Development, Trade and Industry, and Transport.[24]

The Legislature

3.24   The Singapore Legislature is made up of the President and Parliament. The Singapore Parliament is unicameral. It consists of Members from Single-Member Constituencies (SMCs), Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) and Nominated Members of Parliament (NMPs).

3.25   Electoral divisions or constituencies are areas within Singapore demarcated by law for the purposes of Parliamentary and Presidential elections. There are two types of electoral divisions, the SMCs and the GRCs. SMCs are represented by one Member of Parliament (MP), while GRCs comprise three to six MPs. GRCs cover a larger population and area. Under the GRC system, teams of candidates standing for election in a GRC must include at least one member from a minority racial community. This ensures that racial minorities are represented in Parliament.

3.26   Provision for NMPs was made in the Constitution in 1990 to lend wider representation to independent and non-partisan views in Parliament. The President may appoint up to nine NMPs for a term of up to two and a half years. The NMPs are nominated by a Special Select Committee of Parliament. NMPs are persons who have rendered distinguished public service, or who have brought honour to the Republic, or who have distinguished themselves in the field of the arts, culture, the sciences, business, industry, the professions, social or community service or the labour movement. Out of nine NMPs that served in Parliament from March 2016 to September 2018, four were from minority races.

3.27   The Constitution also provides for the election of up to 12 Non-Constituency Members of Parliament (NCMPs). They are additional Members from opposition parties who were not voted in at the General Elections, appointed to allow for the representation of members from a political party or parties not forming the Government in Parliament.

The Judiciary

3.28   Judicial power is vested in the Supreme Court and the State Courts. The Supreme Court Bench consists of the Chief Justice, Judges of Appeal, Judges of the High Court, Senior Judges, International Judges and Judicial Commissioners. There are special provisions in the Constitution to safeguard the tenure of office and the integrity and independence of the judges of the Supreme Court.

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[24] http://www.pmo.gov.sg/the-cabinet

3.29   Singapore is widely reputed for having a corruption-free and efficient judicial system. The benefits of having a sound, corruption-free and efficient system are available to all Singaporeans, regardless of gender, age, race or religion.

<u>Head of State</u>

3.30   In January 1991, the Constitution of Singapore was amended to allow for the election of a President by Singaporeans. The first Presidential election was held on 28 August 1993. To ensure that minority racial communities have an opportunity to be represented, the Constitution was amended in 2017 to provide for a reserved presidential election for a racial community that has not held office for five or more consecutive terms. Such racial communities refer to the Chinese, Malay, or Indian or other minority communities. President Halimah Yacob, Singapore's first Malay female President, was elected to office in 2017.

3.31   The elected President holds office for a fixed term of six years. The President is empowered to veto Government budgets and appointments to key public office positions. He/she can also examine the Government's exercise of its powers under the Internal Security Act and religious harmony laws, and in investigations into cases of corruption. A Council of Presidential Advisors is appointed to advise and make recommendations to the President on any matter referred to by the President under the Constitution. The President must consult the Council before performing some of his/her functions, for instance, the appointment of key civil servants.

Presidential Council for Minority Rights

3.32   The Constitution also provides for a Presidential Council for Minority Rights, which serves as a safeguard against the Government implementing discriminatory laws. The Council's particular function is to scrutinise any bill or subsidiary legislation which, in its opinion, is disadvantageous to any racial or religious community relative to other such communities, and report any discriminatory provisions of the bill or subsidiary legislation to Parliament so that the bill or subsidiary legislation would be reconsidered. The Council also has the general function to consider and report on such matters affecting persons of any racial or religious community in Singapore as may be referred to it by Parliament or the Government.

3.33   The Council originated in 1970, when it was established as the Presidential Council under the Singapore Constitution. It was renamed to its current name in 1973, and comprises up to 20 members, which include religious and community leaders from different racial and religious groups.

<u>General legal and human rights framework</u>

3.34   The Singapore Government is fully committed to the promotion and protection of the human rights of all Singaporeans. We take a practical approach to the realisation of human rights. Our view is that human rights exist in specific cultural, social, economic

and historical contexts, and that accommodation must be reached among the competing rights of the individuals that make up the nation and the broader interests of society as a whole. We therefore firmly apply the rule of law to ensure stability, equality and social justice. The Government tracks the implementation of Singapore's international human rights obligations through the Inter-Ministry Committee on Human Rights. This Committee, which comprises 15 ministries and agencies, engages civil society and coordinates the implementation of cross-cutting human rights policies.

3.35   Singapore's legal system, which was largely founded upon the British legal system, has evolved to suit the nation's needs and circumstances. It is within this legal framework that human rights are protected. Any person who is of the view that his/her legal rights have been infringed can bring an action in the local courts, which will then adjudicate upon the issue according to the applicable law in Singapore.

3.36   The law of Singapore is made up of the Constitution, primary legislation (statutes), subsidiary legislation (rules, regulations, orders, etc.) and judge-made law.[25] The Constitution lays down the fundamental principles and basic legal framework of the State. It also enshrines the fundamental rights and liberties of the individual vis-à-vis the State. Primary legislation or statutes are laws enacted by the Parliament of Singapore or by predecessor legislative bodies that had the power to enact legislation for Singapore. Subsidiary legislation are rules, regulations, orders and other instruments made under statutes by Ministers, government agencies or statutory boards, exercising the powers conferred on them by the relevant statutes.

3.37   Although Singapore's legal system is predominantly based on common law, there is a small degree of legal pluralism, i.e. the application of certain aspects of Islamic personal law to members of the Muslim community.

3.38   The Constitution provides for equality before the law, and there are four key bodies that deal with matters of the law. The Ministry of Law advances access to justice and the rule of law by ensuring a sound and progressive legal framework that is relevant and modern, and enhances economic and social development through the implementation of sound and transparent legal policies. The Attorney-General's Chambers serves Singapore's interests and upholds the rule of law through sound advice, effective representation, fair and independent prosecution, and accessible legislation. The Singapore Academy of Law supports the growth and development of the legal industry, builds up the intellectual capital of the legal profession by enhancing legal knowledge, and improves the efficiency of legal practice through legal technology. The Law Society of Singapore serves its members and the community by sustaining a competent and independent Bar to uphold the rule of law and ensure access to justice by the public. The Society's website has a directory of lawyers and law practices in Singapore, thereby making it convenient for Singaporeans to search for lawyers.

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[25] www.mlaw.gov.sg/our-legal-system.html

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4   Framework for Managing Race Relations

Principles guiding government policies

4.1   Stability, security, and social harmony are the key prerequisites for economic growth, which enables the Government to care for and protect Singaporeans. For Singapore, our immediate priority after independence was to scrupulously manage our racial and religious differences, while steadily forging a nation out of immigrants, against the backdrop of racial riots in the 1950s and 1960s. Racial harmony in Singapore did not come about naturally but resulted from the political will of successive political leaders since our independence and the strong support of Singaporeans. Singapore's political history and unique social context have produced government policies and programmes that focus, as a matter of priority, on maintaining racial and religious harmony.

4.2   Singapore has nurtured racial and religious harmony through the principles of multi-racialism, meritocracy and the secular state that guide government policies. These principles ensure a fair and balanced approach towards all communities.

4.3   Meritocracy is a fundamental principle enshrined in our Constitution and it aims to provide equal opportunities by ensuring that all Singaporeans can progress on individual merit regardless of race. While equal opportunities do not always result in equal outcomes, government policies are put in place to provide support for more vulnerable individuals and groups.

4.4   Secular government refers to the approach of separating government policy decisions from religious priorities. Government policies are guided by an appreciation of religion as a generally positive influence on society, but the primary objective is to foster and maintain harmonious racial and religious group relations in the community by working with religious organisations to deliver programmes that benefit society in general.

4.5   Multi-racialism recognises the uniqueness and diversity of our society while maximising the common space among the different groups to foster shared identity and experiences. Each community is also free to preserve and promote their cultural heritage and to practise their customs and beliefs so long as the rights and sensitivities of other groups are not infringed upon.

Framework for maintenance of social cohesion

4.6   To build a nation, the basic needs of all have to be catered for, and all must be able to share in the fruits of progress and conceive of a common future. From the early years of our development, we invested significantly in the key social pillars of housing, healthcare and education to meet the basic needs of all Singaporeans. Hence, we have also continually developed and refined policies to meet the evolving needs and aspirations of Singaporeans in a changing world. Over the past decade, we have made important policy shifts to strengthen our social safety nets to better protect the vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and the low income. We have also refined our

education policy to cater to different strengths and talents so that Singaporeans can realise their potential and contribute to a more vibrant economy and society.

4.7   Recognising the primordial pulls of race, religion and language, and that social harmony must be constantly sustained by human endeavour, the Government takes a proactive and practical approach to managing race and religious relations. The Government intervenes to expand common spaces and foster shared experiences for all Singaporeans, and takes an even-handed approach in engaging with every community. At the same time, the Government is sensitive to the needs of every community, and gives each community the space to practise its customs and preserve its heritage.

4.8   The Government's approach to preserving and strengthening social cohesion is anchored on three pillars: legislative safeguards for racial and religious harmony; policies that foster social integration and protect the interests of the minorities; and programmes that mobilise the community to build mutual respect and understanding, and to work together for the common good, regardless of race and religion.

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PART II: INFORMATION RELATING TO ARTICLES 1 TO 7 OF THE CONVENTION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In accordance with the Guidelines of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) adopted at its seventy-first session in July/August 2007, Part II of this Report outlines Singapore's progress with regard to Articles 1 to 7 of the Convention.

1.2 ***The Government is committed to maintaining social cohesion within Singapore, and performs this role through the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)***, formed in November 2012. MCCY aims ***to build a more cohesive, caring and confident nation while growing a sense of identity and belonging to the nation.*** Part of its work for community development is to foster harmonious community relations and social cohesion in our multi-religious and multi-racial society. Racial and religious harmony have always been of utmost importance for Singapore, and before MCCY was established arising from the restructuring of ministries in 2012, these efforts and policies were under the purview of the then-Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.

1.3 Singapore's ratification of the ICERD is an affirmation of our longstanding approach to fostering racial harmony in Singapore and our commitment to combating racial discrimination. To look into the implementation and promotion of the ICERD and to report on and monitor its implementation and progress in fulfilling our commitments in combating racial discrimination, Singapore established the Inter-Ministry Committee on the ICERD (IMC-ICERD) in 2015, comprising representatives from various government ministries. ***The IMC-ICERD is a national mechanism for coordinating policies and monitoring the implementation of the ICERD.***

1.4 The Government engages Singaporeans on the issues pertaining to race and religion, as maintaining social cohesion is a shared responsibility between the Government and the people. The IMC-ICERD has sought the views of the non-governmental sector, stakeholders and partners, community and civil society organisations as well as the general public by organising dialogues, forums and workshops on issues pertinent to racial discrimination and the ICERD.

1.5 When Singapore ratified the ICERD on 27 November 2017, a reservation was also entered that allows Singapore to apply its policies concerning the admission and regulation of foreign work pass holders, with a view to promoting integration and maintaining cohesion within its racially diverse society.

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2   ARTICLE 1 – DEFINITION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Definition of racial discrimination in domestic law

2.1   ***In Singapore, equality among the various races is such an integral part of our collective identity that it is written into our Constitution.*** The Constitution of Singapore prohibits racial discrimination, and ensures equality before the law, irrespective of religion, race, descent or place of birth.[26]

2.2   The terms "colour" or "ethnic origin" as used in the Convention are not used expressly in Article 12 of the Constitution. Nevertheless, there is no indication from the negotiating history of the Convention or in the Committee's subsequent interpretation that these terms encompass characteristics that are not already subsumed under "race", "descent" or "place of birth" as used in the Constitution. Singapore has consistently taken this view in promulgating its policies, and carries out its obligations under the Convention, on this basis. In addition, Singapore ensures that religious communities are also equal before the law.

Direct and indirect forms of discrimination

2.3   Singapore understands racial discrimination to include both direct and indirect discrimination. One way Singapore has sought to combat indirect racial discrimination is through the scrutiny of bills by the Presidential Council for Minority Rights before they are passed by Parliament, to ensure that the bill does not contain provisions which would constitute a measure that is, or is likely in its practical application to be, disadvantageous to persons of any racial or religious community and not equally disadvantageous to persons of other such communities, either directly by prejudicing persons of that community, or indirectly by giving advantage to persons of another community.

"Public Life"

2.4   Singapore understands "public life" as used in the Convention to refer to the sphere of public conduct that is customarily the subject of governmental regulation. Should an individual have a complaint about being discriminated on one of the prohibited grounds by an administrative decision, he/she may institute judicial review proceedings. In this way, he/she would be able to ensure that his/her rights are enforced or restored in the public sphere.

2.5   Nonetheless, Singapore has also taken steps to eliminate discrimination in various aspects in the private sphere. For instance, within the domain of employment, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP), a body comprising employer representatives, union leaders and Government officials, provides tools and resources, including training workshops, advisory services and educational

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[26] See Article 12 of the Constitution.

materials to foster the adoption of fair and progressive workplace practices among organisations in Singapore.

2.6   One critical initiative under TAFEP is the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices. These guidelines deal with various aspects of employment-related discrimination, including race. A key principle espoused in these Guidelines is that the recruitment of employees should be on the basis of merit regardless of race, among other characteristics such as age and gender. All organisations in Singapore are expected to abide by the Guidelines.

2.7   The Guidelines also address other aspects of employment-related racial discrimination. For instance, under the Guidelines, employers should justify the need for a specific language requirement if the job entails proficiency in a language. This is to deter employers from potentially using unwarranted language requirements to exclude certain racial groups from employment in their organisations.

2.8   There are enforcement mechanisms that complement these Guidelines. For instance, where employers are found to have practised discriminatory hiring, such as posting discriminatory job advertisements, the Ministry of Manpower restricts such employers' ability to hire foreign workers in Singapore.

Treatment based on citizenship

2.9   Similar to many jurisdictions, Singapore differentiates the state benefits accorded to Singaporeans and foreigners. Singaporeans enjoy rights and privileges as citizens, and are expected to uphold the duties and responsibilities that come with citizenship. To reflect the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship, Singaporeans receive more support and benefits compared to foreigners. These distinctions between Singaporeans and foreigners as a whole are not discriminatory within the meaning of the Convention, given that Article 1(2) of the Convention states that it shall not apply to distinctions made by a State Party to the Convention between citizens and non-citizens.

2.10   Among foreigners, Singapore differentiates between permanent residents and non-residents. Permanent residents enjoy more support and benefits as compared to non-residents, but are also subject to duties such as the obligation of male permanent residents to enlist and perform National Service.[27] The distinction in benefits given to permanent residents and non-residents serves the legitimate aim of differentiating between long-term residents who contribute substantially to Singapore and non-residents who have far less ties to Singapore.

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[27] National Service is a statutory requirement for all male Singaporeans and permanent residents to undergo a period of compulsory service in the uniformed services, which includes the Singapore Armed Forces, Singapore Police Force and Singapore Civil Defence Force. National Service had been introduced by the British colonial government in 1954, and the National Service (Amendment) Bill was passed in 1967, making it compulsory. Under the Enlistment Act, all male Singaporeans and permanent residents are liable to serve full-time National Service at the earliest opportunity upon reaching the age of 18 years old.

2.11   While Singapore welcomes visitors of all nationalities, each visitor's entry into Singapore is neither a right nor automatic. Each entry has to be considered on its own merit. The granting of visit passes to visitors is assessed and determined by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority officers at the Singapore checkpoints upon their arrival. Foreigners deemed ineligible for entry upon arrival will be returned to their last port of embarkation in accordance with international practice. Foreigners with no right of stay in Singapore, or whose right of stay have been withdrawn will either be granted restricted stay to allow them to make arrangements to leave the country, or be repatriated.

2.12   Like all foreigners, migrant and foreign domestic workers are allowed to reside in Singapore within the validity period of the immigration pass/permit issued to them. This requirement applies to all foreigners regardless of nationality.

Provisions of nationality, citizenship and naturalisation

2.13   Singapore's citizenship and immigration laws (i.e. Immigration Act) do not make distinctions on the basis of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin. The Immigration Act mainly makes distinctions between Singaporeans and foreigners. For instance, Section 6 of the Act requires a non-citizen to be in possession of a valid immigration pass/permit to enter Singapore. As for our citizenship laws (i.e. Part X of the Constitution), there is also no such distinction except that the parent(s) must be Singapore citizen(s) in order for a person to be considered a citizen by birth or descent.[28]

Legal provisions for minorities

2.14   The Government cares for the interests of racial and religious minorities, and this duty is enshrined in our Constitution.[29] The Government provides for the needs of minority groups and leverages on existing mechanisms to consult them on policies that could affect them.

2.15   In particular, given the constitutional recognition of "the special position of the Malays, who are the indigenous people of Singapore", the Government has and continues to protect, safeguard, support, foster and promote the political, educational, religious, economic, social and cultural interests of Malays and the Malay language.[30]

3   ARTICLE 2 – ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

General measures to combat racial discrimination

3.1   Singapore uses a combination of legislation, regulation and institutional oversight to protect human rights. Specific to combating racial discrimination, Singapore has

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[28] See Articles 121, 122, 123, 124, 127 of the Constitution which provide for the attainment of citizenship under different circumstances.

[29] Article 152 of the Constitution states that "it is the responsibility of Government to care for interests of racial and religious minorities in Singapore".

[30] See Article 152 of the Constitution.

established several policies and institutions to maintain social cohesion and encourage social mixing in our multi-racial society. These policies encourage interaction among the different communities and therefore promote understanding, acceptance and appreciation for differences.

3.2   In Singapore, social mixing policies have been put in place in two key aspects of Singaporeans' lives: housing and schools. Since 1989, the Government has implemented an *Ethnic Integration Policy* for public housing, which puts in place ethnic quotas in each neighbourhood and apartment block. Its purpose is for each estate to mirror the ethnic composition in the national population, hence preventing the formation of ethnic enclaves and possible associated problems. It also *allows residents to have the opportunity to interact and build relationships with fellow Singaporeans of different races in their daily routines.*

3.3   Apart from encouraging social mixing within public housing, our *national schools*, which enrol almost all Singaporean students, provide a common platform for children of all races to study and play together, regardless of their background. Social mixing in our national schools is ensured by the Compulsory Education Act, which requires all children of compulsory school going age to attend a national primary school, unless an exemption has been granted. *This serves to provide all Singaporeans with a common educational experience, which will help to build a national identity that bridges racial groups and strengthens social cohesion.*

3.4   Besides these policies on social mixing, the Government has also put in place legislative safeguards for racial and religious harmony;[31] as well as policies and programmes that protect the interests of the minorities,[32] which are addressed in the following sections of this Report.

Prohibition of racial discrimination

3.5   The prohibition against racial discrimination is enshrined in the Constitution, the supreme law in Singapore.[33] Article 12 paragraph 1 of the Constitution provides that "all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law". This provision, by virtue of its generality, encompasses the principle of non-discrimination of all racial groups, including ethnic minorities. Article 12 paragraph 2 goes on to prohibit discrimination by the Government on the ground of religion, race, descent or place of birth, in relation to four things: (i) any law, (ii) in the appointment to any office or employment under any public authority, (iii) in the administration of any law relating to the acquisition, holding or disposition of property, and (iv) in the establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment. This reflects Singapore's commitment to nurture an ethos and practice of racial and religious pluralism.

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[31] See paragraphs [3.27 to 3.38] of this Report.
[32] See paragraphs [3.39 to 3.44] of this Report.
[33] See Article 4 of the Constitution.

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3.6   The legal framework prevents racial discrimination by public authority in several domains. The Government cannot enact laws that will be discriminatory, as the Constitution ensures that any law enacted by the Legislature that is inconsistent with the Constitution is void. Any persons who are of the view that their legal rights have been infringed upon can take action through the local courts, which will then adjudicate upon the issue according to the applicable law in Singapore.

3.7   Further, in terms of employment in the public service, the Constitution also provides that "all persons of whatever race in the same grade of the service of the Government shall, subject to the terms and conditions of their employment, be treated impartially".[34] ***Accordingly, all Government agencies practice meritocracy in their hiring practices.***

3.8   The practice of meritocracy in employment within the public service can be illustrated in various domains. Within the legal system, for instance, the appointments of Chief Justice, Judges of Appeal, Judges and Judicial Commissioners, which are made by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister, are based on merit. The racial composition of the Supreme Court Bench is not fixed and varies over the course of time, which has led to ethnic minorities being strongly represented in the Supreme Court.

3.9   Key institutions such as the Singapore Police Force (SPF) and Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) also adopt the principle of meritocracy and do not have racially discriminatory policies. Where SAF personnel are posted and what appointments they hold is based on merit, their capability and aptitude, as well as their commitment to the SAF and Singapore, regardless of race. The ethnic composition of servicemen in the SAF, for instance, corresponds broadly to the ethnic profile of the general population, with major ethnic groups represented.[35] Likewise, recruitment and promotion in the SPF is based on merit, and minorities are well represented. This includes members of ethnic minorities being appointed to senior positions.

Review of policies and laws

3.10   ***The Government takes into consideration the potential implications of policies and laws on racial issues and undertakes reviews pertaining to these areas during Parliamentary debates.*** Over the years, Singapore has reviewed and amended our policies, laws and our Constitution to improve racial and minority representation and social mixing. Such examples include revisions to the Group Representation Constituency system to ensure minority legislative representation, the Ethnic Integration Policy in relation to the sale and purchase of government housing, the introduction of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, and many others, which are highlighted subsequently in this Report.

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[34] See Article 154 of the Constitution.
[35] Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Defence, Parliamentary Questions, www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/ps/2014/07jul14_ps2.html.

3.11   ***One recent review made to improve racial representation in political office was the review of the Presidential Elections Act in 2016***. In order to safeguard representation from minority racial groups in the office of the President of Singapore, the Constitution was amended in 2017 to provide that when a member from any racial group has not occupied the President's office after five continuous terms, the next Presidential election will be reserved for a candidate from that racial group.[36]

3.12   Singapore understands that the obligation imposed by Article 2, paragraph 1(d) of the Convention may be implemented by means other than legislation if such means are appropriate, and if legislation is not required by circumstances.

3.13   While legislative means have their merits in combating racial discrimination, it is not necessarily the only or most effective means. A State should also have the discretion to use the full range of available implementing measures, including non-legislative measures, in order to meet its human rights obligations in a manner that will be effective in the country's specific context. In Singapore, we address racial discrimination and promote social cohesion through various other policies, institutions and community partnerships, to ensure that we address the issue holistically and effectively. These are elaborated on in various sections of this Report.

Support for integrationist organisations and movements

3.14   ***To encourage racial integration, the Government engages Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) to help eliminate barriers and build bridges between races***. This support is largely provided in terms of funding for ground-up initiatives aimed at building racial and religious harmony.

3.15   One NGO active in fostering mutual understanding is OnePeople.sg (OPSG), which aims to foster an appreciation for diversity and facilitate a deeper understanding of race relations. The organisation develops community engagement programmes that build capacity among stakeholders, such as educators and community leaders, to better understand trends and developments concerning community integration, conflict resolution, ground sensing and new media engagement. OPSG has received recurrent government funding for its key activities – such as ongoing dialogues to promote mutual respect and understanding on racial issues and flagship events such as a yearly mass run against discrimination.

3.16   Another group that advocates racial harmony is MENDAKI Club, a community of Malay/Muslim young professionals and students who are engaged in affairs concerning the community, Singapore and the world. It aims to build bridges within the Malay/Muslim community, and across other communities, to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. MENDAKI Club is part of Yayasan MENDAKI, a Self-Help Group that receives funding from the Government.

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[36] The groups are categorised as Chinese, Malay, and Indian and other communities.

3.17   A key community organisation is the Inter-Religious Organisation, Singapore (IRO), an inter-faith NGO in Singapore that promotes peace and harmony amongst various religions. It was founded in 1949, and its members comprise representatives from ten major faiths, namely, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism and the Bahá'í faith. The organisation has also been active in organising inter-faith dialogues and exhibitions, and resource materials for the public to promote greater understanding between communities. MCCY supports the IRO in terms of capacity building through networking platforms organised by the Ministry, as well as forums, training workshops and conferences by community partners.

3.18   The Government provides funding to encourage NGOs and other groups to initiate projects that promote racial integration or address discrimination. On 1 April 2013, *MCCY launched the Harmony Fund to support ground-up initiatives that promote racial and religious harmony*. The scheme is reviewed every three years to top up the fund, and refined further to increase its effectiveness, if necessary.

3.19   The Harmony Fund aims to facilitate civil society and community-driven initiatives that can complement the Government's efforts to nurture stronger bonds and to build bridges between the different racial and religious communities that make up our society. Over time, the Fund seeks to cultivate a mature citizenry, which takes greater ownership in building a more cohesive Singapore. Non-profit organisations may apply for funds of up to S$100,000. Projects include educational resources, training courses or materials, events, activities and dialogue sessions.

3.20   To strengthen Singapore's social cohesion, MCCY launched BRIDGE in 2017, a programme supporting community-driven initiatives to foster a better understanding and appreciation of the diverse religions and cultures in Singapore. This is part of the Government's effort to partner the community in providing safe spaces and opportunities to discuss sensitive issues and deepen our shared understanding of our racial and religious diversity among Singaporeans.

3.21   BRIDGE has three focus areas:
   a.   Develop content (e.g. videos, publications) that fosters an understanding of different religious practices and beliefs as practised in the context of multi-racial and multi-religious Singapore;
   b.   Encourage dialogue and frank discussions on sensitive topics in a safe setting built upon mutual respect; and
   c.   Support and sustain ground-up inter-faith initiatives through MCCY's Harmony Fund.

3.22   There are several examples of ground-up BRIDGE initiatives that are supported by the Harmony Fund. One example is "Ask Me Anything", a series of open-ended discussions to deepen the understanding of specific religions amongst adherents of other faiths. "Ask Me Anything on Islam" kicked off with a dialogue for 50 participants in September 2017. This continued with a follow-up conference for an additional 100 participants in November 2017, where participants contributed the most pressing

questions they had about Islam ahead of the sessions, and these questions were duly addressed in both small group settings and with a panel discussion during the session itself.

3.23   Another example is HarmonyWorks! Conference**,** an annual conference run by OnePeople.sg with their target audience being student leaders from a wide range of schools (various secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, madrasahs,[37] international schools, polytechnics and universities). The conference allows participants to explore current trends and issues on race and religion through small group workshops, panel discussions, and interactive activities such as forum theatre. The conference in July 2018 involved 300 participants and 17 facilitators.

3.24   On 27 January 2018, MCCY organised the inaugural annual National Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle (IRCC)[38] Convention, which served as a platform to bring together IRCC volunteers, academics, the private sector, and leaders from the religious and community organisations to discuss developments on the inter-racial and religious front and ideas on what they could do together in the year ahead. The programme included five parallel break-out tracks looking at the following:

   a. <u>"Jihad Selfie"</u>: A dialogue on countering radicalisation;
   b. <u>Inconvenient Questions:</u> A dialogue on tough questions relating to race and religion;
   c. <u>Common Senses for Common Spaces:</u> Inter-faith dialogue on commonalities across different faiths;
   d. <u>Ties that Overcome Threats to Trust:</u> Sharing and discussion by the Institute of Policy Studies; and
   e. <u>#SpeakUpSpeakOut by Facebook:</u> Social media's role against online extremism.

The open and honest sharing by both religious and lay leaders and the interactive format of the Convention was well-received with participants expressing desire for more of such dialogues.

3.25   Apart from building bridges among the races in Singapore, there are also examples of local NGOs that promote building bridges between different races *and* nationalities. The Government encourages these NGOs and supports their activities through, for example, funding their programmes. These NGOs include the following:

   • <u>Centre for Domestic Employees:</u> Runs programmes and activities to promote social acceptance and integration of foreign domestic workers in Singapore.
   • <u>Migrant Workers Centre:</u> Runs student outreach sessions and service learning projects, for students to gain a better understanding of the migrant worker community in Singapore.

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[37] See paragraph [6.42] of this Report for more information on madrasahs.
[38] The IRCCs are community-level inter-faith platforms in every district formed to promote racial and religious harmony. More details of the IRCC's activities can be found at paragraphs [8.18 to 8.19].

- FAST: Runs a Heritage and Educational Tour in Singapore for foreign domestic workers to enhance their knowledge of Singapore and assist in the understanding of different cultures and customs in Singapore.
- HealthServe (in partnership with community organisations, corporations and churches): Hosts community events for migrant workers as a means to build a community where migrant workers are accepted and supported.

Provisions for minorities

3.26   ***Singapore also employs several measures to benefit minority groups and ensure their interests are taken into account in policies.*** These measures do not confer a separate set of rights to these groups, but instead, ensure that there is full and equal enjoyment of the rights that all Singaporeans have equally, regardless of race.

Legislative safeguards

Minority interests in law making

3.27   One safeguard against the Government implementing discriminatory laws and to protect minority interests is the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, described at Part I, paragraphs [3.32 to 3.33] of this Report.

Laws against the incitement of racial hatred

3.28   The law also prohibits the incitement of racial hatred. The Sedition Act prohibits acts, speech and the printing, publication, sale, distribution, reproduction and importation of publications that, amongst others, promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different races or classes of the population of Singapore.[39] It is also an offence to conspire with any person to carry out any such acts which have, amongst others, the tendency to promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different races.

3.29   Besides the Sedition Act, the Undesirable Publications Act states that it is an offence to make, reproduce, import, possess and sell objectionable publications in certain circumstances. A publication is objectionable if, amongst other things, any part of it describes, depicts, expresses or otherwise deals with matters of race or religion in such a manner that the availability of the publication is likely to cause feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will or hostility between different racial or religious groups.[40]

3.30   The Internal Security Act also empowers the Minister charged with the responsibility for printing presses and publications to prohibit or impose conditions on any publication that is calculated or likely to lead to a breach of the peace, or to promote feelings of hostility between different races or classes of the population.[41]

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[39] See Sections 3(1)(e) and 4 of the Sedition Act.
[40] See Sections 4 and 12 of the Undesirable Publications Act.
[41] See Section 20(1)(c) of the Internal Security Act.

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3.31   The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, introduced in 1990, aims to maintain religious harmony in Singapore by giving the Government powers to issue restraining orders and take other stern measures against any leader, official or individual member of any religious group or institution who stirs up hatred between our religious communities. Under the restraining order, the individual may be restrained from addressing any congregation, publishing any publication or holding office in an editorial board for up to two years.

3.32   The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act also establishes a Presidential Council for Religious Harmony, which advises the Minister for Home Affairs on matters affecting religious harmony in Singapore referred to it by the Minister or by Parliament. This Council considers and makes recommendations to the President on restraining orders issued under the Act. The Council comprises up to 16 members, and includes religious leaders representing various faiths in Singapore.

Laws to ensure fair racial representation for political office

3.33   ***There are safeguards to ensure that Parliament will always be multi-racial in composition***. This is achieved through our electoral system, specifically the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) system.[42] The ***GRC system ensures that ethnic minorities are included in any given slate of candidates in a GRC.*** GRCs were created by a 1988 amendment to the Constitution to ***ensure the representation of minority races in Parliament.*** It also ensures that political parties practise multi-racial politics rather than take political advantage based on race or religion. This was implemented to prevent polarisation in our society by ensuring a racially balanced Parliament.

3.34   The President would designate the GRCs for which at least one of the MPs must belong to the Malay community or the Indian and other minority communities. To further ensure that minority racial groups are always given a voice in Parliament, the Parliamentary Elections Act also requires that at least one-quarter of the total number of MPs in Parliament must be representatives of GRCs.

3.35   As of 28 August 2017, out of 29 constituencies, there are 16 GRCs, of which 10 have at least one member belonging to the Malay community and six with at least one belonging to the Indian or other minority communities. As of 2015, out of the 87 elected MPs, 12 are Malay, 10 are Indian and one is Eurasian. Minorities thus represent 26.3% of all elected MPs, which is higher than the national demographic proportion of 25.7%.[43]

3.36   Notably, out of the nine Nominated Members appointed to Parliament in March 2016, four are from minority races. The minority Nominated Members of Parliament include:[44]

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[42] See Article 39A of the Constitution.

[43] Minister for Law, Mr Shanmugam, in "GRCs 'blunt effect of race on poll results," The Straits Times Aug 9, 2015, www.straitstimes.com/Singapore/grcs-blunt-effect-of-race-on-poll-results.

[44] www.channelnewsasia.com/news/Singapore/special-select-committee-nominates-9-nmps-for-13th-parliament-8136904.

- Mr Azmoon Ahmad, who has served as Chairman of the Association of Muslim Professionals Group from 2012 to 2015;
- Mr Ganesh Rajaram, who has served in various public and industry advisory committees;
- Dr Madhev Mohan, who is an Assistant Professor of Law at Singapore Management University and a founding member of the Singapore Branch of the International Law Association; and
- Ms K Thanaletchimi, who is the President of Healthcare Services Employees' Union, an elected member of the National Trades Union Congress Central Committee and a board member of TAFEP.

3.37   Besides ensuring fair racial representation in the legislature, Singapore has also introduced measures to ensure fair racial representation in the office of the President, as highlighted earlier in this Report. The Presidential elections will be reserved for a candidate from the racial group that has not assumed the office in five consecutive terms. In all other instances, the Presidential election would remain equally open to candidates from all racial groups.

3.38   A concrete example of how the reserved elections work is the Presidential Election of 2017. The election had been reserved for Malay candidates, as no Malay had assumed the office of President of Singapore in more than 46 years, unlike the other two racial groups. In doing so, the Government recognised that "the role of the President as a titular Head of State representing our multi-racial society is important and we should have a system that not only allows but facilitates persons of all ethnic groups to be President from time to time".[45]

Policies and institutions

Provisions of religious expression for minority communities

3.39   The Government also recognises the importance that religious expression plays in the lives of the racial groups in Singapore. ***To ensure that minority groups have an equal opportunity for religious participation, there are several legal and policy measures in place.***

3.40   For the Muslim community, which comprises 99.2% of Malays, the Administration of Muslim Law Act provides for the establishment of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) and imbues MUIS with the authority to administer and advise the President on Muslim affairs. In addition, the Act provides for the establishment of a mosque building fund to which Muslims can contribute for building of mosques in Singapore. The Act also provides for two other key Muslim institutions, namely the Registry of Muslim Marriages, and the Syariah Court, which administer marriage, divorce and ancillary matters of Muslim marriages.

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[45] Parliament of Singapore, Parliamentary Debate 13, session 1, vol 94, sitting 26, "Message from the President."

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3.41   For the Hindu and Sikh communities, which comprise 64.1% of Indians, the Hindu Advisory Board and Sikh Advisory Board, set up during the colonial administration, regularly advise the Government on matters concerning the Hindu and Sikh religion and customs, and matters affecting the respective communities. The Government continues to consult these Boards on issues related to their religious communities. In addition, the Hindu Endowments Board manages four major Hindu temples and organises major annual festivals for the Hindu community.

Financial assistance and academic support

3.42   Singapore recognises that vulnerable communities, such as those with low income and who are from racial minorities in Singapore, may face greater challenges in improving their socio-economic situation. For instance, educational attainments may be affected when a child has to work and study part-time, or does not have access to educational resources due to poverty. To mitigate this, there are ***national schemes such as the Ministry of Education's Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS), which helps low-income students studying in Government-aided schools meet basic education expenses.***

3.43   Students who qualify for the scheme do not need to pay for school fees and standard miscellaneous fees. They also receive free textbooks, school attire, and shoes. In addition, these students receive transport and meal subsidies. Schools are also provided with a school-based financial assistance grant, which they can use to provide assistance to students who may not qualify for the FAS scheme but require financial assistance.

3.44   Another scheme, in line with Singapore's Constitutional commitment to protect and promote the interests of the Malay community, is ***the Tertiary Tuition Fee Subsidy scheme. This scheme was established to support Malays enrolled in local tertiary institutions***, which include polytechnics, arts institutions, universities and others. An annual grant is also disbursed to Yayasan MENDAKI to subsidise tuition fees of eligible Malay tertiary students, and fund other educational programmes for the Malay community.

<u>Programmes and Partnerships with the Community</u>

3.45   ***Beyond national schemes, five ethnic-based Self-Help Groups also provide assistance to persons with low-income within an ethnic community***. These Groups, which are funded through voluntary contributions from the community and financial grants from the Government, help to provide a more targeted community-based assistance that complements the other national schemes set out in paragraphs [3.42 to 3.44, and 6.30 to 6.31] of this Report. These Groups were established based on the principle that progress is best achieved by the community itself, since each ethnic group is unique and would know how best to serve the needs of their own community. The five Groups are the Association of Muslim Professionals, the Chinese Development Assistance Council, the Eurasian Association, the Singapore Indian Development Association, and Yayasan MENDAKI.

3.46 ***Regardless of their ethnic affiliations, the Self-Help Groups collaborate effectively to promote racial cohesion and uplift the community as a whole.*** A key initiative is the Collaborative Tuition Programme, which caters to students across ethnic groups. In August 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Education and four Self-Help Groups[46] to run 30 school-based student care centres. These student care centres provide supervised after-school care within the premises of various primary schools.[47] Another initiative among the Self-Help Groups involves the launching of a joint centre in June 2017 to provide parenting and student enrichment programmes to Singaporeans from all ethnic groups.

4   ARTICLE 3 – PREVENTING RACIAL SEGREGATION

4.1   Singapore has a longstanding policy of encouraging social mixing among the different racial groups in Singapore. This has worked to prevent racial segregation and ethnic enclaves, as well as promote interaction and understanding among Singaporeans.

Preventing segregation in housing

4.2 ***Singapore has long been committed to preventing racial segregation in housing***. Since 1 March 1989, Singapore has implemented the Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) to ensure a balanced mix of various ethnic groups in its public housing or Housing & Development Board (HDB) estates, where approximately 79.9% of the population lives. In 2010, this ethnic quota policy was revised to include not only Singaporeans, but also permanent residents. The inclusion of permanent residents was part of the Government's continuing effort to deepen social integration in public housing estates.

4.3   The EIP applies to new and resale HDB flats, as well as rental HDB flats. The ethnic quotas for each neighbourhood and HDB apartment block are as follows:

Table 1: Ethnic Quotas for HDB neighbourhoods and HDB Apartment Blocks

Ethnic Group	Neighbourhood	HDB Block
Chinese	84%	87%
Malay	22%	25%
Indian/Others	12%	15%

4.4   When either the neighbourhood or block limits are reached for any ethnic group, no further resale or allocation of HDB flats is allowed for that particular group. However, HDB flat owners from the affected ethnic group are allowed to sell their apartment to a buyer of the same ethnic group, as this does not increase the proportion of their ethnic group.

4.5 ***The EIP has helped to maintain racial and social harmony in Singapore by providing opportunities for social mixing among Singaporeans of different races.*** Such opportunities also arise through efforts of the HDB such as the organisation of

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[46] www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/self-help-groups-join-forces-to-run-student-care-centres.
[47] Primary schools generally cater to the educational needs of children aged 7 to 12 years.

'welcome parties' which bring residents and grassroots leaders of a public housing estate as well as HDB officers together and highlight the various community interest groups they can join.[48] Other initiatives that facilitate social mixing include Community Clubs, which provide common spaces for people of all races to come together and pursue common interests such as participation in classes or community programmes; and senior activity centres, which provide common spaces within HDB estates for elderly residents of all races to interact and participate in recreational activities. HDB also has a Good Neighbour Award each year to recognise and honour HDB residents who go the extra mile to enrich their community with exemplary acts of care and neighbourliness. It is jointly organised by HDB and the People's Association.[49]

4.6   ***Due to the EIP, the distribution of racial groups is fairly even across the different planning areas within Singapore.*** Figure 5 of the Annex[50] shows that there is no pattern of minority segregation in the geographic distribution of the ethnic groups in Singapore, as all minority groups are represented across the planning areas of the country.

Monitoring housing trends

4.7   HDB monitors interactions among HDB residents across ethnic groups in its 5-yearly Sample Household Survey. ***Data collected thus far showed positive outcomes as a result of these daily multi-cultural interactions.*** Based on HDB's 2013 Sample Household Survey on residents living in public housing, a majority (85.7%) of the residents interacted with neighbours of other ethnic groups or nationalities. As seen in Figure 6 of the Annex,[51] these interactions have been on the rise from 2008.

4.8   For the group that did not interact with neighbours of different ethnicities or nationalities, 89.4% said it was because they only had neighbours of the same ethnic group. Furthermore, 7.2% of the respondents who did not interact with neighbours of other ethnicities/nationalities cited language barriers as a reason for not interacting with them. Community Clubs, which are located in proximity to housing estates, provide subsidised language courses accessible for all to enrol in. Language classes like these may be useful to mitigate the effect of language barriers on interactions among people from different ethnic groups.

Preventing segregation in schools

4.9   ***Schools in Singapore do not segregate races. National schools, which enrol almost all Singaporean students, are common spaces where individuals from different races interact on a daily basis.*** Students from different racial and religious groups learn and play together, and celebrate both their different cultures and shared identities in schools. In particular, the educational curriculum also consists of modules such as Character and Citizenship Education, which imbues children with various core values, and emphasises

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[48] www.hdb.gov.sg/cs/infoweb/community/care-for-your-neighbours/get-to-know-your-neighbours/welcome-party.
[49] See paragraph [8.20] of this Report for more information on People's Association.
[50] Department of Statistics, Population Census 2010.
[51] HDB Sample Household Survey 2013.

the unity and diversity of a multi-racial society and harmonious living. Further details of the school curricula are set out in paragraphs [8.3 to 8.7] of this Report.

4.10   Within each school, school programmes and co-curricular activities allow students to interact and bond. All schools also commemorate Racial Harmony Day in July every year. In most schools across the nation, students are encouraged to experience the different cultural customs in Singapore, such as by dressing in another culture's traditional costume, and play traditional games such as 'chatek'.[52] The event reminds students of our multi-racial make-up and to celebrate our success as a harmonious nation and society built on a rich diversity of cultures and heritages.

5   ARTICLE 4 – PREVENTING INCITEMENT TO RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Legislative Instruments

5.1   ***Singapore laws prohibit the incitement to racial hatred and discrimination in any form***. The Sedition Act makes it illegal "to promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different races or classes of the population of Singapore".[53] Prohibitions under the Sedition Act may include the provision of any assistance to racist activities, as the definition of sedition includes any person who is guilty of or attempting to conspire with any person to do any act which has or which would, if done, have a seditious tendency".[54] In applying the law, the Singapore courts have stressed that acts which tend to promote ill-will and hostility between different races or classes of the population are serious and the courts are generally inclined to award a custodial sentence for such offences.[55] In a case which involved the distribution of seditious and offensive publications, the court held that in a multi-racial and multi-religious society like Singapore, such acts would have the tendency to cause social unrest thereby jeopardizing racial and religious harmony. The court awarded custodial sentences to the accused in that case.[56]

5.2   ***As race and religion are closely related, our laws against inciting hatred include incitements against both race and religion.*** The Penal Code criminalises acts, words or sounds, made with the intention of wounding the religious or racial feelings of any person. Such offences are punishable with imprisonment of up to three years and/or with a fine.[57] In 2007, an amendment was introduced to the Penal Code to criminalise behaviour that knowingly promotes or tries to promote, on grounds of religion or race,

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[52] *Chatek* or *Capteh* is a traditional game to keep a feathered shuttlecock in the air for as long as possible by kicking it up with the heel of the foot. The name is thought to be either Malay or Hokkien (a Chinese dialect group) in origin. See www.eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/SIP_1732_2010-11-26.html.
[53] See Section 3(1)(e) of the Sedition Act.
[54] See Section 4(1)(a) of the Sedition Act.
[55] *Public Prosecutor v Koh Song Huat Benjamin* [2005] SGDC 272 at paragraph 6.
[56] *PP v Ong Kian Cheong* [2009] SGDC 163.
[57] Section 298 of the Penal Code states that, "Whoever, with deliberate intention of wounding the religious or racial feelings of any person, utters any word or makes any sound in the hearing of that person, or makes any gesture in the sight of that person, or places any object in the sight of that person, or causes any matter however represented to be seen or heard by that person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years, or with a fine, or with both."

disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will between different religious or racial groups, as well as acts that a person knows is prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different religious or racial groups and which disturbs or is likely to disturb the public tranquillity. Such offences would similarly be punishable with imprisonment of up to three years and/or with a fine.[58]

5.3   The amendment was introduced to preserve the social fabric of multi-racial and multi-religious Singapore, at a time when the likelihood of extremists stirring up enmity or ill-will in a religious setting and fanning racist flames had increased globally. A Senior Minister in Singapore expressed the following reasons for the legislation:

> "monthly trends of reports processed worldwide…showed that racism and xenophobia grew by 33%. All the more so…in multi-religious, multi-racial Singapore, maintaining religious and racial harmony is critical. We will only be able to continue enjoying racial and religious harmony if we practice tolerance and moderation as well as sensitivity. We should never take for granted the tolerance and mutual respect between the different religions and races which we have painstakingly nurtured over the past decades."[59]

5.4   ***The legal system also makes provisions for enhanced penalties for some offences if they are racially or religiously aggravated***. In such a case, "the court may sentence the person to one and a half times the amount of punishment to which he would otherwise have been liable for that offence. For the purposes of this section, an offence is racially or religiously aggravated if: (a) at the time of committing the offence, or immediately before or after committing such offence, the offender demonstrates towards the victim of the offence hostility based on the victim's membership (or presumed membership) of a racial or religious group; or (b) the offence is motivated (wholly or partly) by hostility towards members of a racial or religious group based on their membership of that group."[60]

5.5   A restraining order may also be made against any person for "causing feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will or hostility between different religious groups."[61]

5.6   Issues of racial harmony are discussed in Parliamentary debates, where it has been expressed that:

> "We should have no tolerance for those who seek to undermine Singapore's racial and religious harmony. The Government will continue to take a tough stand against those who seek to do so. We will review our legislation, to ensure that they remain relevant."[62]

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[58] See Sections 298 and 298A of the Penal Code.
[59] See Parliament of Singapore: Parliamentary Debates, Parliament no. 11, session 1, volume 83, sitting 14, "Penal Code (Amendment) Bill."
[60] See Section 74 of the Penal Code.
[61] See Section 8 of the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act.
[62] See Parliament of Singapore: Parliamentary Debates, Parliament no. 13, session 1, volume 94, sitting 26, "Action against foreign entities that undermine Singapore's racial or religious harmony."

Since 2005, at least 16 people have been investigated, either under the Sedition Act or the Penal Code, for race or religion-related offences.[63]

5.7   Public authorities and public institutions are subject to administrative law, and are thereby prohibited from promoting or inciting racial discrimination.

5.8   ***There are also measures to indirectly prohibit organisations from promoting or inciting racial discrimination and to recognise participation in such organisations as an offence punishable by law.*** First, Singapore does not permit the registration of organisations that are "likely to be used for unlawful purposes or for purposes prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good order in Singapore".[64] If registered organisations are used at any point for such purposes, the Minister may dissolve that organisation. The consequence of non-registration is that the organisation becomes an "unlawful society" under Section 14 of the Societies Act, and every person connected to the unlawful society, such as members, managers, would be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to fines and/or imprisonment.[65] It is also an offence punishable with fines and/or imprisonment to incite, induce or invite a person to become a member of or to assist to manage an unlawful society.[66]

Non-Legislative Measures

5.9   Non-legislative actions are also taken against racially offensive and discriminatory ideas and views. On the employment front, a notable case in 2012 involved the dismissal of a former National Trades Union Congress employee for offensive views expressed online regarding Malay weddings, which are typically held in communal areas.[67] In another case in 2013, a security agency that had posted a discriminatory job advertisement with a specific preference for Chinese candidates was required to put up an online public apology for 30 days and was barred from hiring new foreign workers.[68]

5.10   Aside from a zero-tolerance approach to racial discrimination in the workplace, racially offensive and discriminatory remarks and actions are not tolerated in schools. Schools make clear that students are expected to adopt respectful and caring attitudes and behaviours to all.

5.11   Where there are reports of instances of racial discrimination in schools, these are promptly investigated and followed up by carrying out appropriate disciplinary actions against offenders, providing support for the victims, and engaging the parents of both sides. More importantly, for students who have erred in their behaviour, schools guide

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[63] "The race issue: How far has Singapore come?" www.straitstimes.com/politics/the-race-issue-how-far-has-singapore-come.
[64] See Section 4(2)(b) of the Societies Act.
[65] See Section 14 (2)-(3) of the Societies Act.
[66] See Section 16 of the Societies Act.
[67] "The race issue: How far has Singapore come?" www.straitstimes.com/politics/the-race-issue-how-far-has-singapore-come.
[68] "MOM takes action against 15 more companies for discriminatory job advertisements," MOM Press Release, 28 November 2013

them towards the right direction and to take responsibility for their behaviours. Offending students are provided with school support such as counselling or interventions to help them understand the consequences and take responsibility for their actions. This helps students to learn from the incident and prevents future incidents.

6 ARTICLE 5 – RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

6.1 Singaporeans enjoy various rights and freedoms equally, irrespective of race, and these are provided for in our legal system, as well as by other policy measures.

Equal treatment before the law

6.2 *The Constitution provides for equality of all persons before the law and equal protection of the law*, which extends to protection against racial discrimination. As stated earlier at paragraphs [3.5 to 3.6] of this Report, the Constitution also prohibits racial discrimination by the Government "in the administration of any law relating to the acquisition, holding or disposition of property or the establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment."[69]

6.3 *The principle of equal treatment and equality before the law is treated very seriously in the Courts*. The Courts are widely reputed to be impartial, with Singapore ranked ninth on the 2016 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, which includes an assessment of a country's civil and criminal justice systems in terms of impartiality and effectiveness. All Judges, Judicial Commissioners and judicial officers in the Singapore courts, take an oath of office and allegiance before assuming their judicial duties. In doing so, they swear or affirm to "faithfully discharge [their] judicial duties", and to "do right to all manner of people after the laws and usages of the Republic of Singapore without fear or favour, affection or ill-will".[70]

6.4 *Access to justice forms one of the core values of the State Courts and this extends to all persons.* To enhance access to justice, the State Courts have set up a Helping to Empower Litigants-in-Person (HELP) Centre to provide information on Court processes, procedures and practices. Legal clinics facilitated by volunteer lawyers are held regularly to provide legal advice to litigants-in-person from all races. Information on court processes, procedures and practices is also readily available on the Supreme Court's website.

6.5 *The provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, which governs the conduct of criminal proceedings, apply equally to all persons regardless of their race, ethnicity or national origin*. Victims of racial discrimination or their family members as well as accused persons have the right to be heard.

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[69] See Article 12 of the Constitution.
[70] See the First Schedule to the Constitution; the Second Schedule to the Supreme Court of Judicature Act; and the Schedule to the Subordinate Courts Act.

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6.6   ***The Courts have the power to ensure that victims of racial discrimination are treated
without prejudice and questioned with the necessary sensitivity***. Under Sections 153
and 154 of the Evidence Act, the court may forbid "indecent and scandalous" questions
from being asked and shall also forbid "any question which appear to …be intended to
insult or annoy, or which though proper in itself, appears to the court needlessly
offensive in form".

Protecting equality and social cohesion while combating the threat of terrorism

6.7   The Government also ensures that equality before the law is protected even when
combating the threat of terrorism that may appear to be linked to a particular ethnic
and/or religious group. The terrorism threat to Singapore is multifaceted and serious.
The Government takes a clear stand against anyone who supports, promotes, and/or
undertakes armed violence regardless of how they rationalise such violence
ideologically or where the violence takes place. Nonetheless, the Government has made
clear that the fight is not against any particular race, ethnicity, or religion, but a fight
against extremism and violence. The Government recognises that a terrorist attack is
intended to fracture society, by creating distrust and hatred between the group
associated with the attacker, and the group(s) associated with the victims.

6.8   The Government works with the community collectively to safeguard Singapore's
racial and religious harmony. The Government is vigilant against attempts to denigrate
any religion or person of another race. Laws such as the Sedition Act and Penal Code,
as described in paragraphs [5.1 to 5.2] of this Report, enable our authorities to take
action against those who make use of race and religion to create divisions.

6.9   ***To ensure that terrorist and similar incidents do not give rise to inter-racial or
religious tensions and worsen such relations, Singapore also fosters and strengthens
relationships among the different communities.*** The SGSecure[71] movement was
launched in 2016 to sensitise, train, and mobilise the community to contribute to
preventing and dealing with a terrorist attack. It unites different races in the common
goal of keeping Singapore safe and secure. Every member of the community, regardless
of race, has a part to play in our fight against terror: to stay alert to ever-present security
threats, stay united during peacetime and in crisis, stay strong to be resilient, and to
bounce back quickly during a crisis.

6.10   A key pillar of the SGSecure movement is strengthening cohesion in peacetime and
crisis. As part of SGSecure, MCCY established the SGSecure Community Network,[72]
where the Government engages with religious organisations to help build mutual trust
and understanding between the various races and religions. The Government recognises

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[71] SGSecure is a national movement which aims to prepare the public in the event of a terrorist attack, and for
which cohesion remains a key objective.
[72] Prior to the SGSecure Community Network, the Community Engagement Programme was initiated in
February 2006 to ensure that we are better equipped to maintain our social cohesion and harmony, and stay
united in a crisis. It involved leaders from a cross-section of our society – grassroots organisations, businesses,
unions, media, educational institutions, and religious and community leaders. Since September 2016, this
Programme has been subsumed under the SGSecure movement.

that community and religious leaders play a key role in ensuring that society remains united and resilient in times of crisis and works with them to convey messages of calm and solidarity to their congregations and wider community. These are positively correlated to social harmony and unity, as it helps prevent misinformation, doubt and hostility from festering. The network will also help mitigate possible hate speech/crime after an incident with racial/religious overtones. ***This is a proactive approach to build closer ties across groups so that Singapore can be resilient and bounce back from crises, especially those with racial or religious overtones, and to put in place response plans to help deal with potential communal tensions after an incident such as a terrorist attack.***

6.11 ***Singapore also takes proactive measures to ensure that the threat of terrorism does not promote negative sentiments about any particular racial or religious group, and that such groups are not stereotyped and marginalised based on the threat of terrorism.*** This is done through BRIDGE programmes that dispel misconceptions and provide avenues for people to clarify sensitive questions on race and religion. This facilitates greater understanding and awareness to combat prejudiced views against such groups.

6.12 For instance, during the launch of BRIDGE,[73] on 31 March 2017, over 120 community and youth leaders viewed a documentary titled Jihad Selfie, by Mr Noor Huda, a PhD candidate from Monash University, Australia. The film investigated the reasons behind self-radicalisation of teenagers in Indonesia. The screening was followed by a dialogue with the film-maker, and was an avenue for the audience to affirm their stand against extremist ideologies and actions while standing in solidarity with the Muslim community in Singapore.

Protecting equality while upholding the law

6.13 Protecting the principle of equality before the law is ensured in law enforcement as well. The Singapore Police Force (SPF) upholds the law, maintains order and keeps the peace in Singapore according to the constitutional principle of equality set out at paragraph [3.5] in this Report. The SPF works in partnership with the community to protect life and property, prevent crime and disorder, detect and apprehend offenders, and preserve a sense of security regardless of an offender's or a victim's race, language or nationality.

6.14 The success of this approach was borne out in a public sentiments survey conducted in 2015, which found that Singaporeans overwhelmingly believe that the police treats them fairly regardless of race and religion.[74]

6.15 While police officers take firm action against offenders, such officers are also expected to be impartial in dealing with members of public. Officers are also expected to be sensitive to the feelings of the parties involved when attending to cases. Attention is

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[73] See paragraphs [3.20 to 3.21] of this Report.
[74] This survey was jointly conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies and OnePeople.sg.

paid by officers to the common racial and religious beliefs and taboos of both victims and suspects. This is especially important in multi-racial Singapore with our diversity of religion and races.

6.16   This approach guarantees the safety, security and freedom of religion for all, and creates a common space where everyone, regardless of race and religion, can live, work and play together. An important part of this approach lies in our laws relating to speech and expression touching on race and religion, as the maintenance of harmony between the different races and religions is one of the pillars supporting Singapore's social compact.

6.17   Inflammatory comments on race and religion have no place in Singapore – a principle enshrined in our legislation. Section 298A of the Penal Code, as described in paragraph [5.2] of this Report, makes it an offence for anyone to promote enmity between different groups on grounds of religion or race, or carry out acts prejudicial to the maintenance of racial and religious harmony. Therefore, divisive speech is quickly repudiated. Firm action has consistently been taken against persons who egregiously or maliciously attack, insult or denigrate another racial or religious group. All persons are equal before the law and for criminal offences, police officers will investigate the facts of the case and apprehend offenders regardless of their race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin.

Right to security and protection from violence or harm

6.18   The law protects everyone's right to security of person and protection by the State against violence or bodily harm, whether inflicted by Government officials or by any individual group or institution. In particular, the Penal Code criminalises acts affecting the human body, such as murder, grievous hurt, wrongful confinement and the use of criminal force and assault.[75] These laws apply equally to Government officials as to all other persons.

Political rights

6.19   The law provides for equal political rights, in particular the right to participate in elections – to vote and to stand for election – on the basis of universal and equal suffrage to take part in the Government as well as in the conduct of public affairs at any level. The Parliamentary Elections Act and the Presidential Elections Act provide for the right of all Singaporeans who are at least 21 years of age and ordinarily resident in Singapore to participate in elections by voting in elections for the legislature and the President, respectively.[76] All Singaporeans who satisfy the qualifying criteria may also participate by standing for elections to the legislature and the presidency.[77] Provisions for minorities have also been taken, as described in paragraphs [3.26 to 3.38] of this Report,

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[75] See Chapter XVI of the Penal Code.
[76] See Article 17A of the Constitution, Sections 5, 38 and 42 of the Parliamentary Elections Act, and Sections 21 and 25 of the Presidential Elections Act.
[77] See Sections 44-45 and 19 respectively of the Constitution for the qualifying and disqualifying criteria.

to ensure that minority communities are represented in the legislature, and in the elected presidency.

6.20 In Singapore, voting is compulsory for all Singaporeans whose names are in the registers of electors as it is as much a fundamental right of citizenship as it is a civic responsibility of Singaporeans to choose and elect their leaders in a democracy. The qualifying criteria to be in the registers of electors does not differentiate between race. Rather, the only criteria is that the individual must be a Singapore citizen, be not less than 21 years of age, is not disqualified from being an elector under any prevailing law, and has a registered local or overseas residential address.[78]

Engagement of community leaders in policy dialogue

6.21 ***Racial and religious communities are given the opportunity to dialogue with the Government on policies that affect them***. The National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony was set up in September 2006. Chaired by the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, the Committee is a national platform for leaders from apex religious organisations, racial and community-based organisations, and the Government to dialogue, build a network of trust, and formulate strategies to strengthen social harmony.

Other civil rights

6.22 Singaporeans also enjoy various civil rights. All Singaporeans equally have the right to freedom of speech, assemble peaceably and without arms, and form associations.[79] In addition, "No citizen shall be banished or excluded from Singapore" and "every citizen has the right to move freely throughout Singapore and to reside in any part thereof".[80] The Constitution also states that "Every person has the right to profess and practice his religion and to propagate it."[81]

6.23 Our constitutionally protected freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association are necessary for a fair and inclusive society. These, however, are not unqualified rights, as acknowledged by Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognises limits to the exercise of rights and freedoms for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

6.24 The law also provides for equal rights to own property. Property ownership is governed by various pieces of legislation such as the Land Titles Act, Residential Property Act, as well as common law. The right of religious groups to acquire and own property and hold and administer it in accordance with law is enshrined in the Constitution.[82] These laws apply to equally to everyone, irrespective of race.

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[78] Elections Department, Singapore, www.eld.gov.sg.
[79] See Article 14 of the Constitution.
[80] See Article 13 of the Constitution.
[81] See Article 15 of the Constitution.
[82] See Article 15(3)(c) of the Constitution.

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<u>Right to nationality</u>

6.25   Singapore strives to ensure that individuals who enter the country desiring to become citizens or permanent residents are able to fully integrate into our society, socially and economically.

6.26   The Constitution allows for the grant of citizenship on the basis of birth, descent, registration or naturalisation. Permanent residence is an intermediate step through which foreigners may take up citizenship in Singapore.

6.27   Any person who wishes to apply for citizenship or permanent residence, including foreign spouses and stateless persons, would have to satisfy prevailing eligibility requirements regardless of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. Each application is evaluated holistically, including considerations as to the applicant's ability to integrate into our society and contribute to Singapore. There are also immigration policies designed to facilitate the long term stay of the foreign spouses of Singaporeans, as the Government strives not to keep families apart. Singaporeans can also sponsor their foreign spouses for permanent residence and subsequently citizenship.

<u>Right to marriage and inherit - civil law and Muslim law</u>

6.28   There are two legal regimes that govern marriage and inheritance in Singapore – civil law and Muslim law. Muslim law is administered by the Syariah Court and governed by the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA). Marriage in civil law is governed by the Women's Charter. Both the Women's Charter and AMLA set out the conditions for a valid marriage, such as the minimum age and consent. Inheritance in civil law is governed by various acts such as the Intestate Succession Act, Wills Act, and Probate and Administration Act. These laws apply equally to all, irrespective of race.

Economic, social and cultural rights

<u>Right to education</u>

6.29   ***Singapore's education programmes and pathways are made available to all students regardless of race or socio-economic background***. The Constitution provides that "there shall be no discrimination against any citizen of Singapore on the grounds only of religion, race, descent or place of birth ─ (a) in the administration of any educational institution maintained by a public authority, and, in particular, the admission of pupils or students or the payment of fees; or (b) in providing out of the funds of a public authority financial aid for the maintenance or education of pupils or students in any educational institution (whether or not maintained by a public authority and whether within or outside Singapore)."[83]

6.30   The Compulsory Education Act, which implemented compulsory primary education[84] in 2003, provides that the parent or guardian of a child between 7 and 14 years of age

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[83] See Article 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore.
[84] Primary education refers to the six years of education when a child is between the ages of 6 and 15 years.

is guilty of an offence if (a) that child fails to attend school regularly at a primary school recognised by the Government, and (b) that child was not given an exemption from compulsory education. Exemptions are granted in limited circumstances, which include home-schooling. Compulsory education applies equally to all Singaporean children and aims to ensure a common core of knowledge that will provide a strong foundation for further education and training.

6.31   *The Singapore education system also provides support programmes for students of all races with specific learning needs, so that they are given opportunities to pursue their interests and realise their potential*. Examples include the Learning Support Programme and the Learning Support for Mathematics, which are early intervention programmes targeted at Primary 1 students who have difficulty grasping English and Mathematics respectively. In addition, all Singaporean primary school students do not pay school fees. They only pay a token sum for miscellaneous fees.

6.32   *Whilst ethnic minorities lag behind the Chinese community in terms of educational outcomes* (Figures 7 and 8 of the Annex)[85], *they have been closing the educational attainment gap since 1980*. More minorities have completed the O-Levels with at least five passes and more have progressed to post-secondary education. This points to the levelling effect of meritocracy in Singapore, where students can succeed on their own merit, regardless of race or socio-economic background.

Language policy

6.33   Singapore has maintained a bilingual policy since 1966. Bilingualism entails learning English and the respective mother tongue languages of the three main ethnic groups: Mandarin for the Chinese, Malay for the Malay community, and Tamil for the Indians. *English is the working language of Singapore, and provides a common language across different racial groups, while the mother tongue serves to strengthen cultural values and a sense of belonging.* The policy is implemented through the education system, which requires students to learn the English language and their respective mother tongues upon joining our national school system at Primary 1. This is in line with the strong desire by the different ethnic communities to preserve their mother tongue languages and for their children to learn them well.

6.34   Students of Chinese, Malay and Indian ethnicity who wish to learn a different official mother tongue language can apply to the Ministry of Education (MOE) to do so. MOE evaluates these applications based on their reasons, evidence of prior foundation in the language and parental commitment to supporting their child in learning the language. Eurasian students, students of mixed parentage and international students can apply to learn any of the three official mother tongue languages.

6.35   *As language is an essential step to building friendships across races, MOE has also put in place measures to support students in learning the mother tongue languages of another race*. For example, the Malay (Special Programme) and Chinese (Special

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[85] Education Statistics Digest 2016; Progress of the Malay Community in Singapore since 1980

Programme) have been made available to all secondary school students who do not opt for the Malay Language or Chinese Language as their Mother Tongue Languages but are interested to study the language as a third language.

6.36   Schools are also encouraged to conduct school-based Conversational Chinese language and Malay language programmes for their students. As of 2015, about 75% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools conduct Conversational Chinese Language and Malay Language programmes. Breaking barriers in communication allows students to better understand their friends who are from different races, enabling greater cultural exchanges amongst students.

Schools to preserve distinct cultures and languages

6.37   The Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools scheme was introduced in 1979 to preserve the traditions and ethos of the Chinese medium schools, aiming to develop students who were proficient in both the English and Chinese language. SAP schools make up about 7% of all schools and are open to students of all races who are proficient in the Chinese Language.

6.38   The SAP schools teach the formal curriculum in English, but most non-examinable subjects are conducted in the Chinese Language. Therefore, students are required to offer the Chinese language at minimally the standard level, i.e. Chinese Language or Higher Chinese Language, as their declared "Mother Tongue Language" subject in order to enter SAP schools. Non-Chinese students who take Chinese Language as their declared mother tongue language and who qualify for SAP schools based on their academic results are also eligible for admission.

6.39   For students whose declared mother tongue language is the Malay Language or the Tamil Language, there are programmes to allow those with the interest and aptitude to pursue Malay and Tamil at a higher level. ***These measures ensure that the different communities that make up Singapore retain their cultural heritage and distinctiveness, while providing access to quality education to students of all races.***

6.40   For Malay language students, the Government introduced the Elective Programme in Malay Language for Secondary Schools in selected schools from 2001. In addition, the Government introduced the Malay Language Elective Programme in selected colleges from 2012. This programme allows Malay Language students to continue their study of Higher Malay and Malay culture at the pre-University level.

6.41   In 2012, the Government also introduced the National Elective Tamil Programme, to allow secondary school and junior college students who have an aptitude for the Tamil Language to acquire greater proficiency in the language and gain a deeper appreciation of the language, literature and culture.

Muslim institutions of education

6.42   ***Madrasahs are outside of the mainstream school system and play a unique role in the Muslim community***. The primary objective of madrasahs is to train and select

religious teachers and leaders to serve the socio-religious needs of the Singapore Muslim community. The secondary objective is to provide academic education within an Islamic environment. They operate as private schools under the Education Act and control of madrasahs is vested in Islamic Religious Council of Singapore under the Administration of Muslim Law Act. That said, the Government provides financial support in non-religious areas. In 2013, Edusave[86] contributions were extended to students in madrasahs and in 2015, the Government announced that it would provide financial support to strengthen the teaching and learning of secular subjects in madrasahs. There are platforms for madrasah students to interact with students from mainstream schools, to increase their inter-racial and inter-religious understanding.

Headscarf-wearing Muslim students

6.43   ***The school uniform preserves the common, secular space in a multi-racial, multi-religious society by emphasising what we share in common.*** Hence, Muslim female students, like all other students, are required to adhere to school uniform policies in mainstream schools, and are not allowed to wear *tudungs* (headscarves) with their school uniforms. Our policy on school uniforms applies to all students equally in national schools at the primary, secondary and junior college levels. The policy does not extend to teachers in national schools, or to students in polytechnics, tertiary institutions and private schools, such as the madrasahs. Muslim students in these institutions are free to wear the *tudung*.

Employment rights

6.44   In Singapore, the right to just and favourable conditions of work and remuneration is protected by the Employment Act, which stipulates the basic employment terms and conditions, as well as the rights and obligations of employers and employees. The law applies equally irrespective of race, and applies to Singaporeans and foreigners alike with some exceptions.

6.45   In addition, the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Act provides for a comprehensive social security system that enables working Singaporeans and permanent residents of all races to set aside funds for retirement, healthcare, home ownership, family protection and asset enhancement. Both employees and employers make monthly CPF contributions.

Employment of headscarf-wearing Muslim women

6.46   Many different ethnic groups and religions live and work together in Singapore. Individuals are also free to practise their respective faiths. The Government is secular and seeks to ***maintain a public common space in our society where people interact with one another regardless of their cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds.*** Workplaces are an important part of this common space.

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[86] The Edusave scheme was launched in 1993 with the aim of maximising opportunities for Singaporean students in government-funded schools by providing resources for school enrichment activities.

6.47   ***For legitimate reasons, some workplaces do not allow Muslim women in uniform to wear the tudung.*** In the public sector, uniforms are to project the common identity of the Public Service, and officers in uniforms are not allowed to modify uniforms on religious grounds so as to visibly uphold the secular nature of the Government and reassure Singaporeans that they will receive key public services fairly and impartially, regardless of race or religion. Female officers are not prohibited from wearing the *tudung* if they are not uniformed officers, unless there are other considerations such as safety. In the private sector too, many employers have uniform or dress code requirements suited to the nature of their work.

Right to housing

6.48   Singapore has ensured the enjoyment of the right to housing through its public housing system developed by the Housing & Development Board (HDB). HDB is Singapore's public housing authority, and plans and develops Singapore's housing estates as well as providing various commercial, recreational and social amenities for residents. As discussed at paragraph [4.2] of this Report, the HDB builds subsidised public housing, and also provides loans to Singaporeans and permanent residents to enable them to purchase such housing.[87] The success of this policy can be seen in rates of home ownership in Singapore, which is 90.7% as of 2017, including both public and private housing. HDB flats are home to 79.9% of Singapore's resident population. The Ethnic Integration Policy, discussed at paragraphs [4.3 to 4.5] of this Report, ensures that all races are given the opportunity to purchase such flats.

6.49   To address potential racial discrimination in the residential property rental market, ***the Council for Estate Agencies (CEA) has introduced guidelines for property agents on properties, investigated racially discriminatory advertising complaints, and urged the public not to condone discrimination***. CEA has reminded agents that they should be sensitive to the diverse and multi-racial nature of society and advise their clients against discriminatory advertising based on ethnicities and nationalities. Property agencies and agents who fail to comply with CEA's guidelines may receive written warnings or face disciplinary action such as financial penalty, suspension and revocation of licence or registration.

Other economic, social and cultural rights

6.50   Everyone enjoys equal participation in cultural activities. The common spaces in HDB estates play an important role in building community ties and are often used for culturally-specific functions that are typically held by different racial groups, such as Malay weddings and Chinese funerals. These common spaces are equally available to all ethnic groups.

6.51   Beyond having equal access, there is also a strong culture of sharing these common spaces in a harmonious and considerate manner. For example, in January 2017, when a Malay wedding and a Chinese funeral were happening at the same common space in a

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[87] See Section 13 of the Housing and Development Act.

HDB estate, guests at the wedding stood still to pay their respects as the funeral procession moved along in the vicinity. The fact that these ethnic events are frequently held in common spaces, not only without incident or objection but with mutual respect and sensitivity, indicates the high level of racial harmony and understanding that exists among the communities in Singapore.

6.52   The Government also provides Singaporeans with opportunities for lifelong learning. Under the Skills Future movement, *all* Singaporeans aged 25 and above, regardless of their race, received an opening credit of S$500 in January 2016, which can be used to access a variety of training courses.

6.53   The law protects the right to form and join trade unions. Trade unions in Singapore are governed by the Trade Unions Act.[88] The right to join and be represented by a union is not differentiated based on race.

6.54   The right to public health, medical care, social security and social services is also equally provided for within Singapore's legal system. There are several social security legislations provided, such as the Central Provident Fund Act, Medishield Life Scheme Act, Child Development Co-Savings Act, Education Endowment and Savings Schemes, which apply equally to all races.

7   ARTICLE 6 – REMEDIES FOR VICTIMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Legal avenues for redress

7.1   Singapore has a range of mechanisms to ensure access to justice for victims of racial discrimination in Singapore. This includes both legal and other measures. For example, redress is available through the courts to vindicate the constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination. ***Any person aggrieved by any legal provision may apply to the courts to seek a judicial review of that particular legislation*** on the grounds that it is ultra vires of Article 12 of the Constitution, which enshrines the principle of equal protection of the law. This will then be subject to adjudication by the courts. Judicial review proceedings can be initiated against any administrative decision which may have been contrary to an individual's rights. These additional powers are conferred to the High Court by the Supreme Court of Judicature Act. Through this mechanism of judicial review, an individual would be able to ensure that his/her rights are enforced.

7.2   ***The specific form of redress for persons who have been discriminated against based on religion, race, descent or place or birth, depends on the applicable law in the particular sphere in which that person has been discriminated. The law provides for criminal sanctions as a form of remedy.*** Outside the criminal law, while there is no right of action on the basis of racial discrimination as such, a victim of racial discrimination may bring a civil action in public law, contract law, or tort law, depending on the facts of each case.

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[88] See Sections 28 and 29 of the Trade Unions Act.

7.3   Singapore ensures that victims of racial discrimination have equal access to the abovementioned avenues for legal redress. In particular, the state ensures that legal services are accessible for those who cannot otherwise afford it. Eligible Singaporeans and permanent residents can avail themselves of civil and criminal legal aid directly provided for or co-funded by the State.

7.4   The courts are the only organs authorised under the Constitution to hear individual complaints of racial discrimination. To date, no cases on racial discrimination have been brought before the Singapore courts.

7.5   With reference to Article 22 of the Convention, Singapore had declared that before any dispute to which the Republic is a party may be submitted to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice under this Article, the specific consent of the Republic of Singapore is required in each case. This is for consistency with Singapore's general approach to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

Other avenues for redress

7.6   At the time of ratification, Singapore had declared that Singapore interprets the requirement in Article 6 concerning "reparation or satisfaction" as being fulfilled if one or other of these forms of redress is made available, and interprets "satisfaction" as including any form of redress effective at bringing the discriminatory conduct to an end. This was done as it is important to have clarity over the understanding of these terms. Singapore provides legal as well as other avenues for redress for victims of racial discrimination.

7.7   Other such avenues include raising concerns or instances of racial discrimination directly to Members of Parliament (including the Prime Minister and the Ministers) during weekly "Meet-the-People" Sessions in their respective electoral constituencies. The Presidential Council for Minority Rights, besides examining bills and subsidiary legislation, also considers matters affecting any racial or religious community that are referred to it by the Parliament or the Government.

Remedies for victims of employment-related discrimination

7.8   *While there is no legislation to specifically address discrimination in employment, the principle of equality is enshrined in the Constitution and is widely applied in the field of employment*. An employee who is aggrieved by unfair employment practices can seek the help of the Ministry of Manpower (MOM).

7.9   *To address any employment-related discrimination, the Government believes that non-legislative measures are preferable and have a greater ability to influence and change mind-sets than legislative measures.* Singapore takes a tripartite approach to deal with employment discrimination issues through the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP).

7.10   Set up in 2006, TAFEP plays an active role in championing fair employment practices. To guide employers, TAFEP issued its ***Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment***

Practices in 2007, which set the expectations for employers to treat their employees fairly and with respect, and refrain from employment practices which discriminate against employees, for example, on the basis of religion, race or gender.

7.11　Even so, the approach taken goes beyond a promotional one. In Singapore, all employers are expected to abide by the principles of fair and merit-based employment, in line with these Tripartite Guidelines. TAFEP plays an active role in looking into complaints about employment discrimination and refers cases to MOM for investigation where warranted. If employers are found to have practiced discriminatory hiring such as posting discriminatory job advertisements, MOM requires them to rectify their practices, and restricts such employers' ability to hire foreign workers in Singapore.

7.12　Jobseekers and employees who feel they have been discriminated against can approach MOM or TAFEP for advice and assistance. Since the launch of the revised Tripartite Guidelines in 2011, the number of complaints on alleged discriminatory employment practices has remained stable at an average of 400 per year. Less than 10% (or about 30) of these complaints relate to race and religion discrimination complaints. This number has remained fairly stable since 2011.

7.13　The majority of race- or religion-related complaints that MOM/TAFEP has received are on discriminatory job advertisements. Under the Tripartite Guidelines, employers are expected to state only selection criteria that are related to qualifications, skills, knowledge and experience required for the job. When specific attributes such as proficiency in a particular language are needed, employers should justify the need for the specific language requirement. Employers found to have discriminatory requirements in their job advertisements will be required to put up online public apologies for 30 days and to rectify their practices, such as correcting or taking down the discriminatory job advertisement. In addition, MOM may also restrict such employers' ability to hire foreign workers in Singapore.

Remedies for victims of discrimination in the residential property rental market

7.14　As highlighted at paragraph [6.49] of this Report, the Council for Estate Agents has introduced guidelines for property agents. Property agencies and agents who fail to comply with these guidelines may receive written warnings or disciplinary action such as financial penalty, suspension and revocation of licence or registration.

7.15　Besides measures undertaken by the Government, *some online property advertising portals have also taken action to address issues of discrimination in the residential property rental market*. For instance, 99.co gives prominence to racially neutral advertisements and has built-in filters in their search function that allow tenants to easily identify advertisers that welcome all races. PropertyGuru suspends and sometimes removes listings when it is made aware of potentially discriminatory content. In addition, the company educates agents on the subject through training,

seminars and workshops.[89] This is illustrative of how the Government *and* private organisations and the community play an important role in combating discrimination within their own spheres of influence.

Remedies for victims of discrimination in schools

7.16   Racially offensive and discriminatory remarks and actions are not tolerated in schools. As set out in paragraph [5.11] of this Report, there is prompt investigation and follow-up in all cases of reported racial discrimination in schools.

7.17   Schools do not condone aggressive or hurtful behaviours. For students who have erred in their behaviour, schools are encouraged to guide them towards the right direction and taking responsibility for their behaviours. Offending students are provided with school support such as counselling or other interventions to help them understand the consequences and take responsibility for their actions. This would be more effective than punishment, especially when the students themselves are able to identify the consequences of their actions. The Ministry of Education provides schools with resources such as a Discipline Framework that outlines some examples of this approach which schools can adopt to correct errant behaviour.

8   ARTICLE 7 – COMBATING PREJUDICES AND PROMOTING INTER-RACIAL UNDERSTANDING

8.1   *Singapore undertakes a wide range of measures not just to combat discrimination but to prevent it by addressing prejudice and promoting awareness and understanding of racial and religious differences in our diverse society.*

Education and Training

Combating prejudice through education

8.2   The Government emphasises a safe and supportive school culture and promotes pro-social values (such as care, respect, harmony and responsibility) in our school communities. Consequently, schools in Singapore adopt a whole-school, multi-pronged approach that focusses on building a culture of care. Important social and emotional skills and positive behaviours (such as relationship management, conflict resolution, respecting others) are explicitly taught in the national curriculum and reinforced through learning platforms such as co-curricular activities, sports and games, project work and school camps.

School curricula

8.3   *Students are taught in schools to respect and celebrate the different cultural and religious practices of the different ethnic groups.* In the mainstream schools' academic

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[89] "Even in weak market, racial bias trumps profit for many Singapore landlords," www.cnbc.com/2017/03/02/singapore-rental-racism-prc-and-indian-tenants-often-deemed-undesirable.html.

curriculum, topics on multi-racialism and the importance of racial harmony are explicitly taught in History, Social Studies and Character and Citizenship Education. Students learn about cultural diversity and the issues related to living in multi-cultural Singapore, such as ethnic and religious sensitivities both in the past and present. Students are taught the origins of the major religions, significance of important beliefs and practices, as well as ways to relate to people of different races and religions. They also learn how to share and maintain common spaces. Learning strategies such as facilitated discussions, interactive drama and learning journeys to places of worship and heritage sites are used to strengthen social cohesion and deepen community engagement. This helps to guard against the development of harmful prejudices and stereotypes.

8.4   In Character and Citizenship Education, students learn about the importance of respecting laws which protect human rights, respecting the diversity of the community and contributing towards improving the lives of others.

8.5   In Secondary Social Studies, students learn about human rights when discussing measures to manage transnational terrorism. For example, students discuss the tensions that can arise when countries, in their bid to enhance their national security, introduce measures such as surveillance of individuals, as well as the No-Fly List.[90] They examine how such measures infringe upon their privacy and freedom of movement as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

8.6   ***Schools complement their diversity curriculum with non-curricular activities.*** These include the annual celebration of Racial Harmony Day and ethnic festivals, learning of a third language at conversational level, Home Stays and Cultural Camps for students to experience lifestyles of other races. Students also undertake experiential learning activities, such as community service projects (e.g. Values in Action),[91] co-curricular activities and cohort-level activities and camps. Through these experiences, our students come to appreciate the importance of respecting diversity and maintaining racial and religious harmony, and develop empathy and skills for effective intercultural communication.

8.7   In addition, to raise awareness about the importance of the rule of law in Singapore, the Ministry of Law, working closely with the Ministry of Education (MOE), has, since 2015, been conducting an annual School Outreach Programme at various junior colleges on the rule of law.

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[90] No-Fly List refers to a subset of the United States (US) government Terrorist Screening Database that contains the identity information of known or suspected terrorists. Individuals on the No-Fly List are prevented from boarding an aircraft when flying within, to, from and over the US. See www.tsa.gov/travel/passenger-support/travel-redress-program.

[91] Values in Action (VIA) are learning experiences that support students' development as socially responsible Singaporeans who contribute meaningfully to the community, through the learning and application of values, knowledge and skills. VIA fosters student ownership over how they contribute to the community. As part of VIA, students reflect on their experience, the values they have put into practice and how they can continue to contribute meaningfully.

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<u>Teacher training curricula</u>

8.8   To facilitate the teaching of Character and Citizenship Education lessons, MOE provides all teachers with lesson ideas to be carried out in class. These lesson ideas provide a range of strategies for teachers to engage students in exploring various issues, such as those related to human rights as well as in promoting and maintaining peace among different groups of people. The Social Studies Secondary unit also conducts courses for teachers to deepen their content knowledge, and expand their range of pedagogies to facilitate discussions taking multiple perspectives.

8.9   Through these courses, teachers are equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge to facilitate discussions among students on issues related to human rights, the rights and responsibilities of citizens as well as roles of Singaporeans, immigrants and foreigners in maintaining harmony in society, and challenges that threaten their rights to enjoy peace and security.

8.10   Many schools have also trained their staff to adopt approaches that involve every member of the school in building positive school culture and behaviour management, such as Restorative Practices[92] and Positive Education[93]. These emphasise relationship-building and strengths-based approaches[94] as means to change rather than punitive action.

<u>Review of educational material</u>

8.11   The Ministry of Education carefully reviews and sets out an Approved Textbook List of textbooks and related materials prescribed for use by students in national schools. Such reviews ensure, among other things, that all language in textbooks which convey stereotyped or demeaning images, references, names or opinions concerning minority racial groups are replaced by images, references, names and opinions which convey the message of the inherent dignity of all human beings and their equality in the enjoyment of human rights.

8.12   The Ministry also plays a key role in developing and reviewing instructional materials distributed to schools to ensure that they are educationally sound and accurate, and

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[92] Restorative Practices (RP) is a process whereby parties with a stake in a specific offence, decide collectively on how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future. Its goal is to create opportunities for victims, offenders and community members to discuss the offence and its aftermath. The key technique of RP is dialoguing and conferencing. These processes provide the victims with opportunities to respond to the errant student, hence promoting forgiveness and reducing fears that might have crystallised between the victim and offender. It also increases the errant student's awareness of the impact of his/her action, hence providing him the opportunity to take responsibility for his/her action while engaging his/her support systems.
[93] The fundamental goal of Positive Education is to promote positive mental health within the school community by building character strengths, virtues, resilience, grit, positive emotions, relationships and accomplishment. When students are educated for both academic learning and skills for attaining positive emotions through positive psychology interventions, they are said to have received positive education.
[94] A strengths-based approach is a collaborative process between the person supported and those supporting the person, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on the individual's strengths and assets.

sensitive to the multi-racial and multi-cultural setting of Singapore. The Ministry develops their own resources for some subjects, such as Character and Citizenship Education, mother tongue languages, Social Studies and Lower Secondary History. The curriculum of these subjects aims to highlight and celebrate the racial diversity found in Singapore, and sensitise all students to the history and culture of different racial groups in Singapore. For approved textbooks written by commercial publishers, the Ministry provides active inputs to the content before they are allowed to be published and sold to the schools.

8.13   In ensuring that the language, images, references, names or opinions used in the instructional materials are accurate and respectful to people of different backgrounds, the curricular branches and/or commercial publishers of Ministry-approved resources would adopt good practices in the development stage. Such practices include checking the reliability of information by cross-referencing with other sources, selecting appropriate illustrations to reinforce the content, and infusing sound values in the content of best fit. Input is also sought not just from principals, teachers and students, but also from academics and specialists in education. All these measures would help ensure that the instructional materials produced are in line with the desire to promote respect and understanding of the culture and history of all racial groups living in Singapore.

Other training curricula

8.14   Other training curricula include workshops and briefings on fair recruitment and treating employees equally and with respect conducted by the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (discussed at paragraphs [7.9 to 7.13] of this Report). The Tripartite Alliance also proactively reaches out to students so that they are familiar with its role and the Tripartite Guidelines.

8.15   The Singapore Police Force also trains all officers to treat all individuals fairly when discharging their duties to prevent, deter, and detect crime in Singapore, regardless of race, language, religion, or national origin. This includes both basic training for all new recruits, and continuous training for all serving officers.

Inter-Cultural Understanding

Institutions and associations

   Racial and religious communities

8.16   ***Singapore has nurtured a network of community leaders that enhances inter-racial and religious understanding by strengthening ties, encouraging interaction and developing trust at multiple levels of community leadership.***

8.17   The National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony aims to build close relationships at the highest levels of community, government, ethnic and faith leaders.

The networks of trust arising from the Committee have enabled the respective communities to discuss religious issues and forge consensus on shared values and norms. The social capital from the Committee has generated multiplier effects beyond the apex tier of leadership.

8.18   At the local level, the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCCs) foster friendships and build mutual respect and understanding, and are important bridges between racial and religious community groups, bringing together leaders from these groups to build friendship and trust. IRCCs also deepen people's understanding of different faiths and communities through inter-ethnic and inter-faith themed activities, such as the inaugural National IRCC Convention held in January 2018, which consisted of dialogues with community activists, academics and private sector experts with the aim of fostering communal bonds and deepening inter-racial and religious understanding. In addition, the IRCCs are trained to respond quickly to racial and religious tensions and will also assist in the recovery process by helping their communities and society as a whole to return to normalcy. Their activities include dialogues and workshops relating to social cohesion.

8.19   There are 89 IRCCs in Singapore. Each IRCC consists of key leaders from local religious and ethnic organisations, and informal leaders in the local community. In the aftermath of a crisis or incident with racial and/or religious overtones, IRCCs will disseminate timely and accurate information, and transmit messages urging solidarity and calm among the community. To date, the IRCCs have reached out to around 90% of all religious organisations, and over 40% have representatives in IRCCs. The outreach effort of the IRCCs is complemented by the SGSecure Community Network, which seeks to raise awareness and build capacity among all religious organisations in building community resilience against terrorist attacks.

8.20   Common spaces are an important avenue for social mixing and promoting racial integration. They are venues for social and recreational activities that facilitate the interaction of residents from different races. There are a variety of Grassroots Organisations, led by the People's Association (PA),[95] which provide opportunities for leadership and interaction on the ground, ensuring harmonious community relations. Many of the events organised by the PA are held in common spaces, such as in HDB estates and Community Clubs.[96]

New immigrants

8.21   ***The Government's efforts to promote inter-cultural understanding among the racial groups also extends to new immigrants. Immigrants are able to observe and celebrate their cultures, and are not expected to give up their own culture and heritage***. In the same vein, immigrants are expected to respect the cultural practices and heritage of

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[95] PA is a statutory board to promote racial harmony and social cohesion in Singapore. PA offers a wide range of programmes to cater to Singaporeans from all walks of life. This is done through their network of 1,800 grassroots organisation and over 100 Community Clubs. Their programmes are varied and include activities like community arts, dialogues, ethnic community events, sports and courses held at Community Clubs.

[96] For more information, please see paragraphs [4.5 and 4.8] of this Report.

others. In order for them to settle well into Singapore society, they are also encouraged to make an effort to understand and adapt to local norms and values, and actively engage other groups in the wider society.

8.22   English has been, and will continue to be, the key language medium that allows people from diverse backgrounds to communicate and bond in Singapore. Immigrants and foreigners are encouraged to use English to help them settle in, connect with locals, and form social networks within the diverse communities in Singapore.

8.23   Overall, the integration process is guided by the following principles:
   a. Integration takes time: Immigrants and foreigners come from a range of cultural heritage and backgrounds. Time is given to them to learn about, and adapt to, local norms and customs.
   b. Integration is a two-way process: Successful integration is dependent on both sides. A good sign of integration is the building of inter-personal relationships between locals and immigrants and foreigners.
   c. Everyone has a role to play: Every individual, regardless of their place in society, needs to do his or her part to promote and sustain integration.

8.24   Some of the key integration policy initiatives in Singapore are:
   a. National Integration Council (NIC)
       The NIC was set up in 2009 to drive integration efforts in a comprehensive and ground-up manner, through partnership of the public, people and private (3P) sectors. The Council has made inroads in strengthening common spaces in schools, workplaces, and the community. The Council is supported by 3P workgroups promoting integration in the domains of schools, workplaces, community and media. The objectives of the various workgroups are as follows:
          i.   Schools: Prepare students for a global workplace;
          ii. Workplaces: Promote a harmonious workplace that thrives on the strengths of diversity;
          iii. Community: Promote integration through the arts, sports, volunteerism and through grassroots organisations; and
          iv. Media: Seed positive integration messages in the mainstream and social media.

   b. Community Integration Fund (CIF)
       The NIC supports ground-up integration initiatives from community groups and companies through the CIF, which co-funds projects that provide opportunities for immigrants, foreigners and Singaporeans to interact with one another. Since its launch in 2009, the CIF has supported an average of 120 projects a year. These programmes leverage platforms such as Sports, Arts and Volunteerism.

   c. Singapore Citizenship Journey
       Introduced in 2011, all naturalised citizens go through a Singapore Citizenship Journey, where they further enrich their understanding of Singapore's history, norms and values, and have the opportunity to build stronger ties within their residential neighbourhood.

8.25 Our grassroots networks also promote integration, with People's Association's Integration and Naturalisation Champions reaching out to new immigrants and helping them to settle into the neighbourhood. These Champions engage new immigrants through regular and sustained platforms, to foster positive relationships.

Other Integration initiatives

8.26 The NIC has implemented many initiatives over the years to promote integration and to create common spaces where people of different nationalities, race and cultures can interact harmoniously. Some of these initiatives include:

a. Workplace Integration Programme
   This programme was launched in 2013 in collaboration with the Singapore National Employers Federation. The programme reaches out to employers to promote the benefits of diversity in the workplace, fair human resources practices irrespective of nationality or race, and to encourage positive social integration between locals, new immigrants and foreign employees. A team of Diversity Champions, consisting of senior human resources practitioners and employers from multi-national companies and small and medium enterprises, meet regularly to share best practices on how to better manage and harness a culturally diverse workforce. These meetings have resulted in the publishing of a best practices booklet to promote these practices to employers.

b. Programmes by OnePeople.sg (OPSG)
   OPSG is a non-governmental organisation that champions racial harmony in Singapore. Their youth-driven initiatives foster an appreciation for diversity and nurture cross-cultural exchanges. OPSG programmes funded by the CIF include CampTeen, which encourages youth to recognise the importance of, and preserve racial harmony through an adventure camp; Camp Ignite!, which engages youth leaders as Racial Harmony Ambassadors and encourages them to actively promote multi-cultural diversity among their peers; and the Orange Ribbon Run which is an annual mass run to promote the message of racial harmony.

c. Programmes by Immigrant and other Associations
   The NIC supports various Immigrant Associations and community groups in their efforts to promote integration. For example, the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations is an umbrella group overseeing more than 300 clans and associations in Singapore. NIC partners the Federation to orientate new immigrants to the importance of Singapore's multi-cultural context. Programmes supported by the CIF initiated by such associations include "Singapore Heritage Visits", a series of visits to places of interest that brings to life Singapore's diverse cultures – such places include the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum, Masjid Jamae Chulia Mosque, and Sri Mariamman Temple. These visits give new immigrants the opportunity to learn more about Singapore's multi-cultural heritage and the contributions of Singapore's immigrant forefathers of different races. The visits

also encourage new immigrants to give back to society by volunteering in the community.

Information

8.27 The media is an important avenue for disseminating information on racial and religious issues, including the efforts taken by both the Government and the community to promote inter-racial and religious harmony. For instance, the media reported on Singapore's signing and ratification of the ICERD and other UN human rights conventions, as well as the broader issues pertaining to these conventions, such as racial discrimination and gender inequality. The media also reports on BRIDGE[97] and other similar initiatives and events that promote understanding of different racial and religious groups. This serves to create awareness of these initiatives and encourage individuals to either find out more on their own, or to participate in future events.

8.28 When the media reports on potentially sensitive racial or religious issues, such as cases of radicalisation involving individuals claiming to act in the name of Islam, reporting is fair and does not encourage prejudice or blame any particular group as a whole. The reporting often includes statements by other community leaders, such as the Catholic Archbishop or the President of the Singapore Buddhist Federation, who speak up for the Muslim community and call for solidarity between Muslims and non-Muslims.

8.29 The Info-communications Media Development Authority has developed Codes of Practice and Guidelines[98] to encourage media organisations to be sensitive to Singapore's multi-racial and multi-religious context. These codes guide media organisations:
   a. when featuring racial or religious groups, to ensure that they are neither disparaged nor cast in a poor light;
   b. to portray racial and religious matters accurately and in a dignified and sensitive manner;
   c. to ensure that content should not encourage or in any way lead to discrimination against any section of the community on account of race, religious, gender, age, occupational status or disability;
   d. to ensure that content should not incite or be likely to incite racial and/or religious intolerance or misunderstanding; and
   e. to exercise sensitivity regarding humour that may offend, such as stereotypes and caricatures in relation to race, religious, gender, age or disability.

8.30 Besides reporting on such activities, the NIC has spearheaded various media initiatives that have been launched over the years to promote friendship among those of different nationalities and races. Some examples include *Kampong Miniku ("My Mini Kampong")* and *Making Friends*.

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[97] See paragraph [3.20] of this Report for more details.
[98] IMDA, www.imda.gov.sg.