

**Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act
(CHAPTER 167A)**

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MAINTENANCE OF RELIGIOUS HARMONY ACT

(CHAPTER 167A)

(Original Enactment: Act 26 of 1990)

REVISED EDITION 2001

(31st July 2001)

An Act to provide for the maintenance of religious harmony and for establishing a Presidential Council for Religious Harmony and for matters connected therewith.

[31st March 1992]

PART I

PRELIMINARY

Short title

1. This Act may be cited as the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act.

Interpretation

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires —

“Council” means the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony constituted under section 3;

“Presidential Council for Minority Rights” means the Presidential Council for Minority Rights constituted under Part VII of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore;

“publication” includes any newsletter, journal, periodical, book, film, videotape, audio tape or any written, pictorial, aural or printed matter containing any audio or visible representation which by its images, form, shape or sound or in any other manner is capable of suggesting words or ideas, and every copy and reproduction or substantial reproduction of any publication;

“religious institution” includes a church, cathedral, chapel, sanctuary, mosque, surau, temple, synagogue or other place of worship;

“religious group” includes —

- (a) any company or other body corporate incorporated under the Companies Act (Cap. 50) or any other written law for the purpose of promoting any religion, religious worship or dealing with religious affairs or practising, conducting, teaching or propagating any religious belief; and
- (b) any body of persons, whether or not registered as a society under the Societies Act (Cap. 311), whose object is the promotion of any religion, religious worship or the practice, conduct, teaching or propagating of any religious belief.

PART II

ESTABLISHMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS HARMONY

Establishment of Council

- 3.—(1) There shall be a Presidential Council for Religious Harmony comprising a chairman and not less than 6 and not more than 15 other members.

(2) Not less than two-thirds of the members of the Council shall be representatives of the major religions in Singapore and the other members shall be persons who, in the opinion of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, have distinguished themselves in public service or community relations in Singapore.

(3) The chairman and every member of the Council shall be appointed by the President, on the advice of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, for a period of 3 years all of whom shall be eligible for reappointment.

(4) Notwithstanding subsection (3), a member, other than the chairman, may be appointed for any shorter period of not less than one year.

(5) The President may, after consultation with the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, at any time revoke the appointment of the chairman or any member of the Council and may, on the advice of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, appoint any person to fill any vacancy which may arise in the Council for any reason whatsoever.

(6) The President may, acting in his discretion, refuse to appoint any person as chairman or member of the Council or to revoke any such appointment if he does not concur with the advice or recommendation of the Council.

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(7) No person shall be qualified to be appointed as a member of the Council unless he is —

- (a) a citizen of Singapore;
- (b) not less than 35 years of age;
- (c) resident in Singapore; and
- (d) not liable to any of the disqualifications provided in subsection (8).

(8) A person shall be disqualified for appointment as a member of the Council who —

- (a) is or has been found or declared to be of unsound mind;
- (b) is insolvent or an undischarged bankrupt;
- (c) has been convicted of an offence by a court in Singapore or Malaysia and sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than one year or to a fine of not less than \$2,000 and has not received a free pardon, except that where the conviction is by a court in Malaysia, the person shall not be so disqualified unless the offence is also one which, had it been committed in Singapore, would have been punishable by a court in Singapore; or

- (d) has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of, or exercised the rights of citizenship in, a foreign country or has made a declaration of allegiance to a foreign country.
- (9) A member shall vacate his seat in the Council if —
 - (a) he ceases to be a citizen of Singapore;
 - (b) by writing under his hand addressed to the chairman he resigns his seat; or
 - (c) he becomes subject to any of the disqualifications provided in subsection (8).

Functions of Council

- 4.—(1) The functions of the Council shall be —
- (a) to consider and report to the Minister on matters affecting the maintenance of religious harmony in Singapore which are referred to the Council by the Minister or by Parliament; and
 - (b) to consider and make recommendations on orders referred to the Council by the Minister under section 11.
- (2) The Council shall have the power to appoint a Secretary to the Council and such other officers as may be required to enable the Council to carry out its functions under this Act.
- (3) The Council may, subject to the provisions of this Act, regulate its own procedure.
- (4) The Council shall not transact any business unless a quorum of not less than half of its members, including the chairman or member presiding, is present.
- (5) The chairman, if present, shall preside at all meetings of the Council.
- (6) Whenever the office of chairman is vacant or the chairman for any reason is unable to attend a meeting, such other member as the members present shall elect shall preside at the meeting.

Validity of Council's actions

- 5.—(1) The Council may, subject to section 4(4), transact its business notwithstanding any vacancy among its members.
- (2) The proceedings or any decision of the Council shall be valid notwithstanding any defect in the appointment of its members or that some person who was not entitled to do so took part in its proceedings.