



# THE STATUTES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

## SOCIETIES ACT 1966

### 2020 REVISED EDITION

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# Societies Act 1966

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An Act relating to societies.

[27 January 1967]

**Short title**

1. This Act is the Societies Act 1966.

**Interpretation**

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires —
  - “Assistant Registrar” means an Assistant Registrar of Societies appointed under section 3;
  - “officer” means the president, the secretary and members of the committee of a society and includes persons holding positions analogous to those of president, secretary or member of a committee;
  - “place of business” means the place where the records and books of account of a society are kept;

“political association” means a political party and includes any society which the Minister may by order declare to be a political association;

*[Act 28 of 2021 wef 07/07/2022]*

“registered society” means a society registered or deemed to be registered under this Act;

“Registrar” means the Registrar of Societies appointed under section 3;

“society” includes any club, company, partnership or association of 10 or more persons, whatever its nature or object, but does not include —

- (a) any company registered under any written law relating to companies for the time being in force in Singapore;
- (b) any company or association constituted under any written law;
- (c) any limited liability partnership registered under the Limited Liability Partnerships Act 2005;
- (d) any trade union registered or required to be registered under any written law relating to trade unions for the time being in force in Singapore;
- (e) any cooperative society registered as such under any written law;
- (f) any mutual benefit organisation registered as such under any written law relating to mutual benefit organisations for the time being in force in Singapore;
- (g) any company, association or partnership, consisting of not more than 20 persons, formed for the sole purpose of carrying on any lawful business that has for its object the acquisition of gain by the company, association or partnership, or the individual members thereof;

- (h) any class, society or association of foreign insurers carrying on insurance business in Singapore under any foreign insurer scheme established under Part 2A of the Insurance Act 1966; or
- (i) any school or management committee of a school constituted under any law regulating schools for the time being in force in Singapore.

### **Appointment of Registrar and Assistant Registrars**

3. The Minister may appoint by name or office a Registrar of Societies and such Assistant Registrars as may be necessary.

### **Registration of specified societies and refusal to register**

4.—(1) Subject to this section, the Registrar shall upon application by any society specified in the Schedule (referred to in this Act as a specified society) and on payment of the prescribed fee register the society.

(2) The Registrar shall refuse to register a specified society if he is satisfied that —

- (a) the rules of the specified society are insufficient to provide for its proper management and control;
- (b) the specified society is likely to be used for unlawful purposes or for purposes prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good order in Singapore;
- (c) the application for registration does not comply with the provisions of this Act or any regulations made thereunder;
- (d) it would be contrary to Singapore's national security or interest for the specified society to be registered; or  
*[Act 28 of 2021 wef 07/07/2022]*
- (e) in the case of any specified society which is a political association, its rules do not provide for its membership to be confined to citizens of Singapore or it has such affiliation or connection with any organisation outside Singapore as is considered by the Registrar to be contrary to the national interest.

- (3) The Registrar may refuse to register a specified society if —
- (a) he is satisfied that the specified society is a branch of or is affiliated to or connected with any society which has been dissolved under section 24 or under any previous written law relating to societies or which has been previously refused registration;
  - (b) a dispute exists among the members of the specified society as to the persons who are to be officers or to hold or to administer any property of the specified society; or
  - (c) it appears to him that the name under which the specified society is to be registered —
    - (i) is likely to mislead members of the public as to the true character or purpose of the specified society or so nearly resembles the name of some other society as is likely to deceive the members of the public or members of either society;
    - (ii) is identical to that of any other existing society; or
    - (iii) is in the opinion of the Registrar undesirable.

(4) Any person aggrieved by the decision of the Registrar under this section may within 30 days from the date of the decision appeal to the Minister whose decision shall be final.

(5) The Registrar shall, by notification in the *Gazette*, publish such particulars as he thinks fit in respect of every specified society registered under this section.

### **Registration of societies not specified in Schedule**

**4A.**—(1) A society may apply to be registered under this section if it is not a specified society.

(2) An application for registration under this section shall be accompanied by —

- (a) the prescribed fee for the purposes of registration under this section;
- (b) a copy of the proposed rules of the society;

- (c) a declaration in such form as the Registrar may require as to the object, purpose or activity of the society; and
- (d) such other documents and duly completed forms as the Registrar may require.

(3) The Registrar shall, on the basis of an application under subsection (2) in respect of a society and without making any further inquiry —

- (a) register the society on the date he receives the application; and
- (b) inform the applicant that he has received the application and registered the society.

(4) The Registrar shall, by notification in the *Gazette*, publish such particulars as he thinks fit in respect of every society registered under this section.

(5) Notwithstanding subsection (3)(a), where it appears to the Registrar that any society registered under that subsection ought not to have been so registered by reason that it is a specified society —

- (a) the Registrar shall recover from that society as a debt due to the Government any difference in the amount of the prescribed fee for the purposes of registration under this section and section 4; and
- (b) that society shall, by virtue of this subsection, be deemed to be registered under section 4 on the date of its registration.

(6) Nothing in subsection (5) shall be construed as preventing the Minister from exercising any of his powers under section 24 in respect of any society referred to in that subsection.

### **Annual registers to be published**

5. The Registrar shall as soon as may be after 1 April every year prepare and publish in the *Gazette* a list of all registered societies.

### **Cessation of existence of society**

6.—(1) If the Registrar or an Assistant Registrar has reason to believe that any registered society has ceased to exist, he may publish

in the *Gazette* a notification calling upon the society to furnish him with proof of its existence within 3 months from the date of the notification. A copy of the notification shall be sent by registered post to the place of business of the society.

(2) If at the expiration of the 3 months the Registrar is satisfied that the society has ceased to exist, a notification to that effect shall be published in the *Gazette*, and the society shall be deemed to have ceased to exist from the date of the publication.

### **Voluntary dissolution of society**

7.—(1) Any registered society which proposes to dissolve itself voluntarily in accordance with its rules shall inform the Registrar in writing, and a certificate of dissolution, signed by the president, the secretary and the treasurer or officers of the society holding analogous positions, shall be sent to the Registrar within one week of the society's dissolution.

(2) On receiving the certificate of dissolution, the Registrar shall, if he is satisfied that the society has been dissolved in accordance with its rules, publish a notification in the *Gazette* declaring that the society has ceased to exist.

### **Inspection and certified copies of documents**

8.—(1) Subject to subsection (3), any person may on payment of the prescribed fees inspect any document in the possession of the Registrar or an Assistant Registrar received from any registered society and be supplied with a copy of or an extract from any such document.

(2) A copy of or an extract from any such document certified to be a true copy or extract under the hand and seal of the Registrar or the Assistant Registrar shall be admissible in evidence in any proceedings.

(3) No person shall be allowed to inspect the accounts of a registered society or be supplied with a copy of or an extract from those accounts unless the Registrar is satisfied that the person is a member of the society.

**Branch of society**

9.—(1) No registered society shall establish a branch without the prior approval of the Registrar.

(2) The Registrar may refuse to approve the establishment of a branch of the registered society if —

- (a) the rules of the society do not provide for the establishment of a branch of the society; or
- (b) the rules of the branch of the society are such as to make it an independent society not adequately under the control of the society.

(3) Where a registered society establishes a branch without the prior approval of the Registrar, the branch so established shall be deemed to be an unlawful society.

(4) Any person who is aggrieved by the decision of the Registrar under this section may within 30 days from the date of the decision appeal to the Minister whose decision shall be final.

**Information to be furnished by societies and persons responsible for supplying information**

10.—(1) The Registrar or an Assistant Registrar may at any time by notice under his hand order any registered society to furnish him with any such information as he may require concerning the society (such as but not limited to the patron of the society and every person managing or assisting in the management, of that society in Singapore) or any documents, accounts and books relating to the society.

*[Act 28 of 2021 wef 07/07/2022]*

(2) The obligations imposed upon a registered society by subsection (1) shall be binding upon every officer, and upon every person managing or assisting in the management, of that society in Singapore.

(3) If any registered society fails to comply with the whole or part of any order given under this section, each of the persons mentioned in subsection (2) who has been served with the order shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding

\$5,000 unless he establishes to the satisfaction of the court that he has exercised due diligence and has failed to comply with the order for reasons beyond his control.

(4) If any information supplied to the Registrar or an Assistant Registrar in compliance with an order given under this section is false, incorrect or incomplete in any material particular, the person who supplied the information shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 unless he establishes to the satisfaction of the court that he had good reason to believe that the information was true, correct and complete.

### **Change of name, place of business and rules of society**

**11.—**(1) No registered society shall —

- (a) change its name or place of business; or
- (b) amend its rules,

without the prior approval in writing of the Registrar or an Assistant Registrar.

(2) If a registered society fails to comply with the requirement of subsection (1), the society and every officer of the society shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$3,000.

(3) For the purposes of this section —

“amend” includes making a new rule and rescinding an existing rule; and

“rules” includes the aims and objects for which a society is formed, or which it may pursue, or for which its funds may be applied; the qualifications for membership and for the holding of any office; the method of appointment or election to any office; the rules by which the society is to be governed; and the method and manner by and in which any of the above matters may be amended.

(4) Any person aggrieved by the refusal of the Registrar or an Assistant Registrar to approve the change of name or place of business of a registered society or to amend its rules may within

30 days from the date of the decision appeal to the Minister whose decision shall be final.

**Registrar may order change of name or rules of society registered under section 4A**

**11A.**—(1) If the Registrar is of the opinion that the name of any society registered under section 4A —

- (a) is likely to mislead members of the public as to the true character or purpose of the society or so nearly resembles the name of some other society as is likely to deceive members of the public or members of either society;
- (b) is undesirable or offensive;
- (c) is identical to that of any existing society; or
- (d) is likely to give the impression that the society is connected in some way with the Government or any public authority, or with any other body of persons or any individual, when it is not so connected,

the Registrar may, at any time, by notice under his hand, order the society to change its name, within such time as is specified in the notice, to such other name as he may approve.

(2) The Registrar may, at any time, by notice under his hand, order any society registered under section 4A to amend its rules, within such time as is specified in the notice, in such manner as he may direct, if he is of the opinion that the rules of the society, if unchanged, would be contrary to national interest or prejudicial to the public peace, welfare or good order in Singapore.

(3) A society registered under section 4A and every officer of that society shall comply with any notice given under this section.

(4) If a society registered under section 4A fails to comply with any notice given under this section, the society and every officer of that society shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$3,000.

(5) If an officer of a society registered under section 4A is charged with an offence under subsection (4), it shall be a defence for him to

establish to the satisfaction of the court that he has exercised due diligence and has failed to comply with the notice for reasons beyond his control.

(6) In this section, “amend” and “rules” have the same meanings as in section 11(3).

### **Persons who shall not act as officers of society**

**12.**—(1) No person shall act as an officer of a registered society or a branch thereof if —

- (a) he has, while being a member of a society, been convicted for an offence involving the unlawful expenditure of the funds of the society; or
- (b) he has been declared, in writing, by the Minister to be unfit to act as an officer of a society by reason of any conviction for a criminal offence other than that specified in paragraph (a), unless the written permission of the Minister to so act is first obtained.

(2) Any person who acts in contravention of this section shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to both.

### **Use of flag, symbol, etc.**

**13.**—(1) No registered society shall use any flag, symbol, emblem, badge or other insignia without the consent in writing of the Registrar or an Assistant Registrar.

(2) Any person aggrieved by the refusal of the Registrar or an Assistant Registrar to the use of a flag, symbol, emblem, badge or other insignia may appeal against that decision to the Minister whose decision shall be final.

(3) In any case where a registered society uses a flag, symbol, emblem, badge or other insignia in contravention of subsection (1) —

- (a) the officers of the society; and

- (b) all persons managing or assisting in the management of the society,

shall be deemed to be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to both.

### **Unlawful societies**

**14.**—(1) Every society, not being a registered society, shall be deemed to be an unlawful society; but no society shall be deemed to be unlawful under this section if and so long as the Registrar is satisfied that —

- (a) it is organised wholly outside Singapore; and  
(b) does not carry on any activity in Singapore.

(2) Any person who manages or assists in the management of any unlawful society shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.

(3) Any person who is or acts as a member of an unlawful society, or attends a meeting of an unlawful society, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 years or to both.

(4) Every offence under subsection (3) shall be deemed to be a non-bailable offence and an arrestable case within the meaning of the Criminal Procedure Code 2010.

### **Persons allowing unlawful assembly in their premises**

**15.**—(1) Any person who knowingly allows a meeting of an unlawful society, or of members of an unlawful society to be held in any house, building or place belonging to or occupied by him, or over which he has control, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 years or to both.

(2) Every offence under subsection (1) shall be deemed to be a non-bailable offence and an arrestable case within the meaning of the Criminal Procedure Code 2010.

**Penalty for inciting, etc., person to become member of unlawful society**

16.—(1) Any person who incites, induces or invites another person to become a member of, or to assist in the management of, an unlawful society shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 years or to both.

(2) Any person who uses any violence, threat or intimidation towards any person in order to induce him to become a member of, or to assist in the management of, an unlawful society shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 4 years or to both.

**Penalty for procuring subscription or aid for unlawful society**

17. Any person who procures or attempts to procure from any other person any subscription or aid for the purposes of an unlawful society shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or to both.

**Publishing, etc., propaganda of unlawful society**

18. Any person who prints, publishes, displays, sells or exposes for sale, or transmits through the post or who, without lawful authority or excuse, has in his possession any placard, newspaper, book, circular, pictorial representation or any other document or writing whatsoever which is issued or appears to be issued by or on behalf of or in the interests of an unlawful society shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or to both, and any book, periodical, pamphlet, poster, proclamation, newspaper, letter or any other document or writing in respect of which the person is convicted shall be forfeited.

**Penalty for misuse of money or property of registered society**

19.—(1) Where on complaint made by a member of a registered society or by the Registrar it is shown to the satisfaction of a District Court or a Magistrate's Court that any officer or member of that

society has in his possession or control any property of the society otherwise than in accordance with the rules of the society, or has unlawfully withheld any money of the society or wilfully applied such money to purposes other than those expressed or directed in the rules of the society and authorised by this Act, the Court shall, if it considers the justice of the case so requires, order the officer or member to deliver all such property to the trustees of the society or such other persons as the Court may appoint and to pay to them the money so unlawfully withheld or improperly applied.

(2) A complaint made under subsection (1) other than a complaint made by the Registrar shall not be entertained unless the Court is satisfied that the complainant is, on the date of the complaint, a member of the registered society in respect of whose property the complaint is so made.

(3) Any person who, bound by an order made under subsection (1), fails to comply with the terms of the order and the directions in the order within a time to be specified in the order shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000.

(4) An order made under subsection (1) shall not affect or prevent a prosecution of, or civil proceedings against, any such officer or member.

### **Punishment of fraud, false declaration and misappropriation**

**20.** Any person who with intent to mislead or defraud any other person gives to the other person a copy of any rules, regulations or other documents, other than the rules of a registered society, on the pretence that they are the existing rules of the society or that there are no other rules of the society or gives to the other person a copy of any rules on the pretence that those rules are the rules of a registered society when the society is not registered, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to both.

**Presumptive proof of existence of society**

**21.**—(1) In any prosecution for an offence under this Act where it is proved that a club, company, partnership or association exists —

- (a) it shall be presumed, until the contrary is proved, that the club, company, partnership or association is a society within the meaning of this Act;
- (b) it shall not be necessary to prove that the society possesses a name or that it has been constituted or is usually known under a particular name; and
- (c) it shall be presumed until the contrary is proved that it consists of and has at all material times consisted of 10 or more persons.

(2) Notwithstanding any other written law in any prosecution for an offence under this Act, for the purpose of proving the existence of a society, evidence may be adduced and shall be admitted which shows that —

- (a) any person is reputed to be a member of the society;
- (b) any announcement has been made, whether by the person charged or by any other person by any means whatever, that the society has been formed or is in existence; or
- (c) by repute the society is in existence.

**Presumptive proof of membership, etc., of society**

**22.**—(1) Where any books, accounts, writings, seals, banners or insignia of or relating to or purporting to relate to any society are found in the possession of any person, it shall be presumed, until the contrary is proved, that that person is a member of the society, and the society shall be presumed, until the contrary is proved, to be in existence at the time the books, accounts, writings, seals, banners or insignia are so found.

(2) When any books, accounts, lists of members or seals of or relating to any society are found in the possession of any person, it shall be further presumed, until the contrary is proved, that that person assists in the management of the society.

**Society using triad ritual to be deemed unlawful society**

**23.**—(1) Every society, whether it is registered or not, which uses a triad ritual shall be deemed to be an unlawful society.

(2) Any person found in possession of or having the custody or control of any books, accounts, writings, seals, banners or insignia of or relating to any triad society or branch of a triad society, whether the society or branch is established in Singapore or not, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 years or to both.

(3) Every offence under subsection (2) shall be deemed to be a non-bailable offence and an arrestable case within the meaning of the Criminal Procedure Code 2010.

**Minister may order dissolution of any society**

**24.**—(1) Whenever it appears to the Minister that —

(a) any registered society is being used for unlawful purposes or for purposes prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good order in Singapore or against Singapore's national security or interest;

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(b) the registration of any society has been procured by fraud or misrepresentation;

(c) any registered society is being used for purposes incompatible with the objects and rules of the society;

(d) the rules of any registered society are or have been inadequate for its proper management and control and the registered society has failed without reasonable cause to amend its rules within 3 months of, and in accordance with, a direction from the Registrar to amend its rules for those purposes;

(e) the rules of any registered society which is a political association do not provide for its membership to be confined to Singapore citizens, and the society has failed without reasonable cause to amend its rules within

3 months of, and in accordance with, a direction from the Registrar to amend its rules for those purposes;

- (f) any registered society which is a political association has such an affiliation or connection with any organisation outside Singapore as is considered by the Registrar to be contrary to Singapore's national security or interest, and has failed to satisfy the Registrar that it has taken appropriate action to sever that affiliation or connection within 3 months of, and in accordance with, a direction from the Registrar to take such action; or

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- (g) any registered society has wilfully contravened any provision of this Act or of any regulations made thereunder, or of any of the rules of the society,

the Minister may order that the society shall be dissolved.

(1A) For the purpose of subsection (1)(a), a certificate issued by the Minister charged with the responsibility for internal security stating that the Minister is satisfied that the society referred to in the certificate is being used for purposes against Singapore's national security or interest is conclusive evidence that the society is being used for such purposes.

*[Act 28 of 2021 wef 07/07/2022]*

(2) Notification of every such order shall be published in the *Gazette*, and shall be affixed in a conspicuous manner on any building occupied by the society.

(3) Every society against which an order for dissolution is made shall from then on be deemed to be an unlawful society.

(4) Where an order of dissolution has been made against any society every person who on the date on which the order was made was an officer of that society shall, during the period of 3 years from the date on which the order was made, be ineligible, except with the written permission of the Minister, to act or be elected as an officer of any other society.

(5) Any person who acts without the written permission of the Minister as an officer of a society while he is ineligible under

subsection (4) shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to both.

(6) The fact that a political association uses a name or symbol which is the same as that of an organisation outside Singapore shall be deemed to be sufficient evidence that the political association has an affiliation or connection with that organisation.

### **Consequences upon order of Minister under section 24**

**25.—**(1) Upon the making of an order of dissolution against any society under section 24 —

- (a) the property of the society shall forthwith vest either in the Official Receiver or, if any other officer is appointed for the purpose of winding up by the Minister in the notification of the order, then in that officer; and
- (b) the Official Receiver or that other officer shall proceed to wind up the affairs of the society and, after satisfying and providing for all debts and liabilities of the society and the costs of winding up, shall pay the surplus assets, if any, of the society —
  - (i) where the Minister so directs, into the Consolidated Fund; and
  - (ii) in the absence of a direction by the Minister, to the members of the society according to the rules of the society.

(2) For the purposes of the winding up of the affairs of the society, the Official Receiver or that other officer shall have all the powers vested in the Official Receiver under the Insolvency, Restructuring and Dissolution Act 2018 for the purpose of the discovery and realisation of the property of a debtor, and the provisions of that Act shall apply, with the necessary modifications, to the winding up of the affairs of the society under this Act.

[40/2018]

(3) The Minister may, for the purpose of enabling a society to wind up its own affairs, suspend the operation of this section for such period as to him seems expedient.

### **Power of Magistrate, etc., to enter place kept as place of meeting**

26. The Registrar or an Assistant Registrar or a Magistrate or any police officer authorised in writing by the Registrar or an Assistant Registrar or a Magistrate may at any time enter any place which he has reason to believe is kept or used by any registered society or any of its members as a place of meeting or business.

### **Power to enter and search in special cases**

27. The Registrar or an Assistant Registrar or a Magistrate, who has reason to believe that any registered society is being used for purposes prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good order in Singapore or incompatible with the rules and objects of the society as entered in the Register of Societies or furnished to the Registrar or to an Assistant Registrar under this Act, may enter or may in writing authorise a police officer to enter, with or without assistance and using force for that purpose, if necessary, any place which he has reason to believe is used as the place of meeting or business of the society, and may search or may in writing authorise a police officer to search that place and any person found in or escaping from that place for evidence that the society is being used for such purposes.

### **Magistrate, etc., may enter house, etc., where unlawful meeting held, or books, accounts, etc., kept, may arrest and seize persons and property found**

28.—(1) Any Magistrate or Justice of the Peace or police officer not below the rank of assistant superintendent may enter, with or without assistance, or may by warrant under his hand or by writing under his hand, as the case may be, authorise any other police officer to enter, with or without assistance, using force in either case, if necessary, any dwelling house or other building, or any place in which he has reasonable ground to believe that a meeting of an unlawful society, or of persons who are members of an unlawful society, is being held, or

that any books, accounts, writings, banners or insignia belonging to an unlawful society are concealed, kept or deposited, and to arrest or cause to be arrested all persons found in the house and to search that house, building or place, and seize or cause to be seized all books, accounts, writings, banners, documents, flags, insignia, arms and other articles which he has reasonable cause to believe belong to any unlawful society, or to be in any way connected therewith.

(2) All persons so arrested and all articles so seized may be detained in custody till they can conveniently be brought before a District Court or Magistrate's Court to be dealt with according to law.

### **Registrar and Assistant Registrar to have power to summon witnesses**

**29.**—(1) The Registrar or an Assistant Registrar may summon before him any person whom he has reason to believe is able to give any information as to the existence or operations of any unlawful society, or suspected unlawful society, or as to the operations of any registered society.

(2) The person so summoned shall attend at the hour and place specified in the summons and produce all documents in his custody, possession or power relating to that society or suspected society, and shall answer truthfully all questions which the Registrar or an Assistant Registrar may put to him.

(3) The Registrar and every Assistant Registrar shall be deemed to be public servants within the meaning of the Penal Code 1871, and may administer oaths to and examine on oath any person summoned before him under this section.

(4) If the Registrar or an Assistant Registrar is satisfied, after due inquiry, that a person summoned under this section is a member of an unlawful society or has refused to give information or has given false information as to the existence or operations of an unlawful society or suspected unlawful society, the Registrar or the Assistant Registrar may, if he considers it advisable to make provision for the identification of that person, order that a photograph and finger impressions of the person shall be taken at such time and in such place and manner as the Registrar or the Assistant Registrar thinks fit.

(5) If that person refuses to comply with such an order, he may be arrested and detained in custody until he can conveniently be brought before a District Court or Magistrate's Court to be dealt with according to law.

(6) Any person who fails to comply with any such order shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$1,000.

### **Charges**

**30.**—(1) Except in the case of persons arrested under section 28, no person shall be charged with an offence under this Act or any regulations made thereunder unless the sanction in writing of the Registrar or of an Assistant Registrar has been first obtained.

(2) Prosecutions in a District Court or in a Magistrate's Court under this Act or any regulations made thereunder may, with the authorisation of the Public Prosecutor, be conducted by the Registrar or by an Assistant Registrar or by some person authorised in writing by the Registrar or by an Assistant Registrar to appear on his behalf.

### **Jurisdiction**

**31.**—(1) Any offence under section 14(2) may be tried by a District Court which may pass the sentence specified in that section.

(2) Any offence under any other section of this Act or any regulations made thereunder may be tried by a District Court or by a Magistrate's Court.

### **Forfeiture**

**32.** Any books, accounts, writings, banners, insignia or other property belonging to any unlawful society shall be forfeited and given to the Registrar or to an Assistant Registrar.

### **Service of summons, etc.**

**33.** Every summons, notice or other document issued under this Act, or under any regulations made thereunder, shall be deemed to have been validly and effectually served, if served in the manner

prescribed by the Criminal Procedure Code 2010 for the service of summonses under that Code.

### **Amendment of Schedule**

**33A.** The Minister may, by notification in the *Gazette*, amend the Schedule.

### **Regulations**

**34.—**(1) The Minister may from time to time make regulations for or with respect to all or any of the following matters:

- (a) to prescribe the manner of registration of societies under this Act;
- (b) to regulate or restrict changes of the name of registered societies;
- (c) to regulate or restrict changes of the place of business or place of meeting or of the registered rules or objects of registered societies;
- (d) to prescribe the manner and conditions in and under which the powers conferred by this Act shall be exercised by the persons on whom the powers are conferred;
- (e) to prescribe the fees which may be charged and taken under this Act;
- (f) to prescribe the forms which may be used for carrying out the provisions of this Act;
- (g) to require the accounts and financial statements of registered societies to be in compliance with —
  - (i) accounting standards that are made or formulated by the Accounting Standards Committee under Part 3 of the Accounting Standards Act 2007 and applicable to societies; or  

*[Act 36 of 2022 wef 01/04/2023]*
  - (ii) other requirements substituted by the Minister in lieu of compliance with the accounting standards applicable to societies;

- (h) to provide for relief from the requirements of such accounting standards applicable to societies;
- (i) to provide that the regulations made under paragraph (g) shall not apply to any society that is registered as a charity or approved as an institution of a public character under the Charities Act 1994 to the extent that that Act requires the society's accounts and financial statements for any financial year to comply with the accounting standards applicable to charities to the exclusion of other accounting standards;
- (j) generally for carrying into effect the provisions of this Act.

(2) The Minister in making any regulations under this Act may direct that a person committing a breach of such regulations shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$500 and, where the breach is a continuing one, to a fine not exceeding \$50 for every day after the first day during which the breach continues.

(3) All such regulations shall be published in the *Gazette* and shall be presented to Parliament as soon as possible after publication.

### **Provisions applicable to registered societies**

**35.**—(1) The following provisions shall apply to all registered societies:

- (a) the movable property of a society, if not vested in trustees, shall be deemed to be vested for the time being in the governing body of the society, and in all proceedings civil and criminal may be described as the property of the governing body of the society by their proper title;
- (b) every such society may sue or be sued in the name in which it was registered under this Act;
- (c) an originating claim or other legal process may be served on a society by serving it on an officer of the society, or by leaving it at, or sending it by registered post to, the registered address of the society;

*[Act 25 of 2021 wef 01/04/2022]*

- (d) except as otherwise provided in section 36, no judgment in any suit against a registered society shall be put into force against the person or property of any officer or member of the society but only against the property of the society;
- (e) any member who is in arrears of subscriptions which, according to the rules of the society, he is bound to pay, or who takes possession or detains any property of the society contrary to those rules, or who injures or destroys any property of the society, may be sued for the arrears or for the damage accruing from his wrongful possession, detention, injury or destruction of that property by and in the name of the society;
- (f) any member of the society who steals, purloins or embezzles any money or other property, or wilfully and maliciously destroys or injures any property of the society, or forges any deed, bond, security for money, receipt or other instrument whereby the funds of the society may be exposed to loss, shall be subject to the same prosecution, and, if convicted, shall be liable to be punished in like manner as any person, being not a member, would be subject and liable to in respect of the like offence;
- (g) subject to subsection (2), in the absence of any specific provision in the rules of a society, any number not less than three-fifths of the members of the society for the time being resident in Singapore may determine that it shall be dissolved forthwith, or at a time agreed upon, and all necessary steps shall be taken for the disposal and settlement of the property of the society and its claims and liabilities according to the rules of the society applicable thereto, and if none, then as the governing body finds expedient;
- (h) no society shall be dissolved unless three-fifths of the members so resident as mentioned in paragraph (g) have expressed a wish for such dissolution by their votes delivered in person or by proxy at a general meeting convened for the purpose.

(2) In the event of any dispute arising among the members of the governing body or the members of the society, the adjustment of its affairs shall be referred to the General Division of the High Court, and the General Division of the High Court shall make such order in the matter as it thinks fit.

[40/2019]

### **Security for costs and liability of officers**

**36.**—(1) Where a registered society or any of its officers purporting to act on its behalf is claimant in any action or other legal proceeding, the court having jurisdiction in the matter may, if it appears by credible testimony that there is reason to believe that the society or the officer will be unable to pay the costs of the defendant if successful in his defence, require sufficient security to be given for those costs and stay all proceedings until the security is given.

[Act 25 of 2021 wef 01/04/2022]

(2) Where a society is required to give security for costs under subsection (1) and the amount of the security is not sufficient to pay the costs of the defendant —

- (a) the officers of the society who approved the institution of the action or legal proceeding; and
- (b) any person who, on subsequently becoming an officer of the society, does not take any reasonable measure for the purpose of seeking the discontinuance of the action or legal proceeding,

shall be jointly and severally liable for any part of the costs awarded against the society which, after deducting the amount of the security, remains unsatisfied after one month from the date the costs became payable.

(3) This section shall apply to any action or legal proceeding whether instituted before or after 10 September 1982.

### **Power to exempt**

**37.** The Minister may at his discretion in writing exempt any society registered under this Act from all or any of the provisions of this Act.

**Transitional provision**

**38.** Any society which immediately before 27 January 1967 was registered under the provisions of the Societies Ordinance (Cap. 228, 1955 Revised Edition) shall be deemed to be registered under this Act.

**THE SCHEDULE**

Sections 4(1) and 33A

**SPECIFIED SOCIETIES**

1. Any society whose object, purpose or activity, whether primary or otherwise, is to —

- (a) represent;
- (b) promote any cause or interest of; or
- (c) discuss any issue relating to,

any religion, ethnic group, clan, nationality or a class of persons defined by reference to their gender or sexual orientation.

2. Any political association.

3. Any society which uses the word “National” or “Singapore” in its name, except where the word “Singapore” or any abbreviation thereof is used to indicate the society’s place of registration.

4. Any society whose object, purpose or activity, whether primary or otherwise, is to —

- (a) represent persons who advocate;
- (b) promote; or
- (c) discuss any issue relating to,

any civil or political right (including human rights, environmental rights and animal rights).

5. Any society whose object, purpose or activity, whether primary or otherwise, is to discuss any matter relating to the governance of the Singapore society.

6. Any society whose object, purpose or activity, whether primary or otherwise, is to promote or discuss the use or status of any language.

7. Any society which is formed under the instruction of a foreign government or an organisation affiliated to a foreign government.

THE SCHEDULE — *continued*

8. Any society which is formed under the instruction of a foreign organisation or is affiliated to a foreign organisation or whose major source of funding is from outside Singapore, but does not include the Rotaract Club, the Rotary Club, the Toastmasters Club and the Lions Club.

9. Any alumni of an educational institution that is not established in Singapore.

10. Any society which has an office bearer who —

- (a) was previously holding office in a society that was dissolved under section 24 and the order for dissolution was made less than 3 years ago;
- (b) while being a member of any society, was convicted for an offence involving the unlawful expenditure of the funds of the society; or
- (c) has been previously declared in writing by the Minister to be unfit to act as an officer of a society.

11. Any society whose object, purpose or activity, whether primary or otherwise, is to promote, discuss any issue relating to, or to provide training in any form of pugilistic or martial arts.

12. Any society whose object, purpose or activity, whether primary or otherwise, is related to —

- (a) the manufacture, cultivating, smoking, administering, consuming, trafficking, importing or exporting of, or any other activity involving (whether directly or indirectly), a controlled drug as defined in section 2 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1973;
- (b) the playing of a game of chance, a game that involves both an element of chance and an element of skill or a game that is presented as involving an element of chance, whether for money or money's worth;
- (c) the making or accepting of a bet, whether for money or money's worth, on the outcome of a competition, an event or a process;
- (d) a game, method, device, scheme or competition by which a prize, whether consisting of money or money's worth, is distributed or allotted in any manner depending upon or to be determined by chance or lot, whether the game, method, device, scheme or competition is held, drawn, exercised or managed inside or outside Singapore; or
- (e) the provision of sexual services for payment or reward.

13. Any society whose object, purpose or activity is to —

- (a) commit; or
- (b) promote or facilitate the commission of,

THE SCHEDULE — *continued*

an offence under any written law or an act that would constitute an offence under a written law if committed in Singapore.

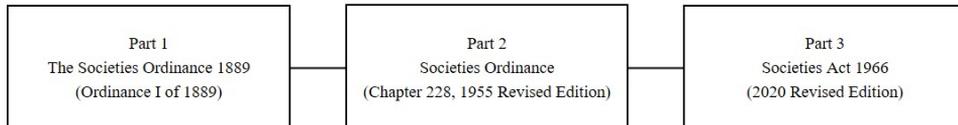
*[S 961/2020]*

# LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

## SOCIETIES ACT 1966

This Legislative History is a service provided by the Law Revision Commission on a best-efforts basis. It is not part of the Act.

### PICTORIAL OVERVIEW OF PREDECESSOR ACTS



### LEGISLATIVE HISTORY DETAILS

#### PART 1

#### THE SOCIETIES ORDINANCE 1889

#### (ORDINANCE I OF 1889)

##### **1. Ordinance XIX of 1869 — Dangerous Societies Suppression Ordinance, 1869**

Bill	:	Information not available
First Reading	:	14 September 1869
Second Reading	:	28 September 1869
Notice of Amendments	:	24 November 1869
Third Reading	:	24 November 1869
Commencement	:	24 November 1869 (passed)

##### **2. Ordinance XVI of 1870 — Dangerous Societies Suppression Continuation Ordinance, 1870**

Bill	:	S.S.G.G. No. 44/1870
First and Second Readings	:	29 October 1870
Notice of Amendments	:	11 November 1870
Third Reading	:	17 November 1870
Commencement	:	17 November 1870 (passed)

##### **3. Ordinance V of 1872 — The Dangerous Societies Suppression Ordinance, 1872**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 147/1872
First Reading	:	15 August 1872

Second Reading	:	22 August 1872
Commencement	:	26 September 1872 (passed)

**4. Ordinance IV of 1882 — The Dangerous Societies Ordinance, 1882**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 48/1882
First Reading	:	31 January 1882
Second Reading	:	16 February 1882
Notice of Amendments	:	28 February 1882
Third Reading	:	7 March 1882
Commencement	:	1 June 1882

**5. Ordinance IV of 1885 — The Dangerous Societies Ordinance, 1885**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 119/1885
First Reading	:	24 March 1885
Second Reading	:	9 April 1885
Notice of Amendments	:	23 April 1885
Third Reading	:	28 April 1885
Commencement	:	28 April 1885

**6. Ordinance I of 1889 — The Societies Ordinance 1889**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 723/1888
First Reading	:	19 December 1888
Second Reading	:	8 February 1889
Notice of Amendments	:	14 February 1889
Third Reading	:	21 February 1889
Commencement	:	1 January 1890

**7. Ordinance VII of 1893 — The Societies Ordinance Amending Ordinance 1893**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 322/1893
First Reading	:	10 August 1893
Second Reading	:	17 August 1893
Third Reading	:	23 November 1893
Commencement	:	23 November 1893

**8. Ordinance X of 1901 — The Societies Ordinance 1889 Amendment Ordinance 1901**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 570/1901
First Reading	:	30 April 1901
Second Reading	:	4 June 1901
Notice of Amendments	:	18 June 1901
Third Reading	:	2 July 1901
Commencement	:	2 July 1901

PART 2  
SOCIETIES ORDINANCE  
(CHAPTER 228, 1955 REVISED EDITION)

**9. Ordinance XX of 1909 — The Societies Ordinance 1909**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 773/1909
First Reading	:	16 July 1909
Second Reading	:	30 July 1909
Notice of Amendments	:	19 November 1909
Third Reading	:	26 November 1909
Commencement	:	13 December 1909

**10. Ordinance XXII of 1911 — The Societies Ordinance 1909 Amendment Ordinance 1911**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 1354/1911
First Reading	:	3 November 1911
Second Reading	:	10 November 1911
Notice of Amendments	:	17 November 1911
Third Reading	:	27 November 1911
Commencement	:	9 December 1911

**11. Ordinance 17 of 1920 — Executive Council (Delegation of Powers) Ordinance, 1920**

(Amendments made by section 2 read with the Schedule to the above Ordinance)

Bill	:	G.N. No. 750/1920
First Reading	:	3 May 1920

Second Reading	:	31 May 1920
Third Reading	:	5 July 1920
Commencement	:	19 July 1920 (section 2 read with the Schedule)

**12. 1920 Revised Edition — Ordinance No. 116 (Societies)**

Operation	:	28 November 1921
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**13. Ordinance 26 of 1921 — Statute Laws (Revised Edition) Operation Ordinance, 1921**

(Amendments made by section 3(a) read with Schedule C to the above Ordinance)

Bill	:	G.N. No. 1854/1921
First and Second Readings	:	22 November 1921
Notice of Amendments	:	22 November 1921
Third Reading	:	22 November 1921
Commencement	:	28 November 1921 (section 3(a) read with Schedule C)

**14. Ordinance 25 of 1923 — Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance, 1923**  
(Amendments made by section 8 of the above Ordinance)

Bill	:	G.N. No. 1862/1923
First and Second Readings	:	17 December 1923
Notice of Amendments	:	17 December 1923
Third Reading	:	17 December 1923
Commencement	:	31 December 1923 (section 8)

**15. 1926 Revised Edition — Ordinance No. 116 (Societies)**

Operation	:	1 August 1926
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**16. Ordinance 14 of 1931 — Societies (Amendment) Ordinance, 1931**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 866/1931
First Reading	:	11 May 1931
Second Reading	:	6 July 1931
Third Reading	:	31 August 1931
Commencement	:	2 October 1931

**17. Ordinance 61 of 1935 — Societies (Amendment) Ordinance, 1935**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 2752/1935
First Reading	:	28 October 1935
Second Reading	:	20 November 1935
Notice of Amendments	:	9 December 1935
Third Reading	:	9 December 1935
Commencement	:	19 December 1935

**18. 1936 Revised Edition — Societies Ordinance (Chapter 217)**

Operation	:	1 September 1936
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**19. Ordinance 5 of 1940 — Societies (Amendment) Ordinance, 1940**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 3786/1939
First Reading	:	11 December 1939
Second and Third Readings	:	12 February 1940
Commencement	:	28 February 1940

**20. Ordinance 23 of 1947 — Societies (Amendment) Ordinance, 1947**

Bill	:	G.N. No. S 154/1947
First and Second Readings	:	Information not available
Third Reading	:	29 May 1947
Commencement	:	12 June 1947

**21. Ordinance 37 of 1952 — Law Revision (Penalties Amendment) Ordinance, 1952**

(Amendments made by section 2 read with item 76 of the Schedule to the above Ordinance)

Bill	:	32/1952
First Reading	:	16 September 1952
Second and Third Readings	:	14 October 1952
Commencement	:	30 April 1955 (section 2 read with item 76 of the Schedule)

**22. 1955 Revised Edition — Societies Ordinance (Chapter 228)**

Operation	:	1 July 1956
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**23. Ordinance 9 of 1958 — Societies (Amendment) Ordinance, 1958**

Bill	:	147/1958
First Reading	:	22 April 1958
Second and Third Readings	:	11 June 1958
Commencement	:	4 July 1958

**24. Ordinance 71 of 1959 — Transfer of Powers Ordinance, 1959**

(Amendments made by section 4 read with the First Schedule to the above Ordinance)

Bill	:	30/1959
First Reading	:	22 September 1959
Second and Third Readings	:	11 November 1959
Commencement	:	20 November 1959 (section 4 read with the First Schedule)

**25. G.N. No. S (N.S.) 178/1959 — Singapore Constitution (Modification of Laws) (No. 4) Order, 1959**

Commencement	:	20 November 1959
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**26. G.N. No. S (N.S.) 179/1959 — Singapore Constitution (Modification of Laws) (No. 5) Order, 1959**

Commencement	:	20 November 1959
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**27. Ordinance 37 of 1960 — Societies (Amendment) Ordinance, 1960**

Bill	:	54/1959
First Reading	:	29 December 1959
Second Reading	:	14 January 1960
Select Committee Report	:	Sessional Paper No. L.A. 12 of 1960
Third Reading	:	16 May 1960
Commencement	:	22 July 1960

**28. Ordinance 26 of 1963 — Societies (Amendment) Ordinance, 1963**

Bill	:	15/1963
First Reading	:	28 November 1963
Second and Third Readings	:	19 December 1963
Commencement	:	28 December 1963

PART 3  
SOCIETIES ACT 1966  
(2020 REVISED EDITION)

**29. Act 56 of 1966 — Societies Act, 1966**

Bill	:	55/1966
First Reading	:	5 December 1966
Second and Third Readings	:	21 December 1966
Commencement	:	27 January 1967

**30. 1970 Revised Edition — Societies Act (Chapter 262)**

Operation	:	31 July 1971
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**31. Act 16 of 1982 — Societies (Amendment) Act, 1982**

Bill	:	7/1982
First Reading	:	25 March 1982
Second and Third Readings	:	27 July 1982
Commencement	:	10 September 1982

**32. 1985 Revised Edition — Societies Act (Chapter 311)**

Operation	:	30 March 1987
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**33. Act 41 of 2001 — Insurance (Amendment) Act 2001**  
(Amendments made by section 39 of the above Act)

Bill	:	35/2001
First Reading	:	25 September 2001
Second and Third Readings	:	5 October 2001
Commencement	:	8 January 2002 (section 39)

**34. Act 9 of 2003 — Statutes (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2003**  
(Amendments made by section 14 of the above Act)

Bill	:	7/2003
First Reading	:	20 March 2003
Second and Third Readings	:	24 April 2003
Commencement	:	16 May 2003 (section 14)

**35. Act 15 of 2004 — Societies (Amendment) Act 2004**

Bill	:	14/2004
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First Reading	:	19 April 2004
Second and Third Readings	:	19 May 2004
Commencement	:	1 September 2004

**36. Act 5 of 2005 — Limited Liability Partnerships Act 2005**

(Amendments made by section 60(1) read with item (13) of the Sixth Schedule to the above Act)

Bill	:	64/2004
First Reading	:	19 October 2004
Second and Third Readings	:	25 January 2005
Commencement	:	11 April 2005 (section 60(1) read with item (13) of the Sixth Schedule)

**37. Act 39 of 2007 — Accounting Standards Act 2007**

(Amendments made by section 15 read with item (3) of the Second Schedule to the above Act)

Bill	:	27/2007
First Reading	:	16 July 2007
Second and Third Readings	:	27 August 2007
Commencement	:	1 November 2007 (section 15 read with item (3) of the Second Schedule)

**38. Act 15 of 2010 — Criminal Procedure Code 2010**

(Amendments made by section 430 read with item 98 of the Sixth Schedule to the above Act)

Bill	:	11/2010
First Reading	:	26 April 2010
Second Reading	:	18 May 2010
Third Reading	:	19 May 2010
Commencement	:	2 January 2011 (section 430 read with item 98 of the Sixth Schedule)

**39. 2014 Revised Edition — Societies Act (Chapter 311)**

Operation	:	28 February 2014
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**40. Act 40 of 2018 — Insolvency, Restructuring and Dissolution Act 2018**

(Amendments made by section 515 of the above Act)

Bill	:	32/2018
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First Reading	:	10 September 2018
Second and Third Readings	:	1 October 2018
Commencement	:	30 July 2020 (section 515)

**41. G.N. No. S 961/2020 — Societies Act (Amendment of Schedule) Notification 2020**

Commencement	:	26 November 2020
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**42. Act 40 of 2019 — Supreme Court of Judicature (Amendment) Act 2019**  
(Amendments made by section 28(1) read with item 151 of the Schedule to the above Act)

Bill	:	32/2019
First Reading	:	7 October 2019
Second Reading	:	5 November 2019
Notice of Amendments	:	5 November 2019
Third Reading	:	5 November 2019
Commencement	:	2 January 2021 (section 28(1) read with item 151 of the Schedule)

**43. 2020 Revised Edition — Societies Act 1966**

Operation	:	31 December 2021
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**44. Act 25 of 2021 — Courts (Civil and Criminal Justice) Reform Act 2021**

Bill	:	18/2021
First Reading	:	26 July 2021
Second and Third Readings	:	14 September 2021
Commencement	:	1 April 2022

**45. Act 28 of 2021 — Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act 2021**  
(Amendments made by the above Act)

Date of First Reading	:	13 September 2021 (Bill No. 24/2021 published on 13 September 2021)
Second and Third Readings	:	4 October 2021
Date of Commencement	:	7 July 2022

**46. Act 36 of 2022 — Accountancy Functions (Consolidation) Act 2022**  
(Amendments made by the above Act)

Bill	:	29/2022
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First Reading	:	3 October 2022
Second and Third Readings	:	9 November 2022
Commencement	:	1 April 2023

## Abbreviations

(updated on 29 August 2022)

G.N.	Gazette Notification
G.N. Sp.	Gazette Notification (Special Supplement)
L.A.	Legislative Assembly
L.N.	Legal Notification (Federal/Malaysian)
M.	Malaya/Malaysia (including Federated Malay States, Malayan Union, Federation of Malaya and Federation of Malaysia)
Parl.	Parliament
S	Subsidiary Legislation
S.I.	Statutory Instrument (United Kingdom)
S (N.S.)	Subsidiary Legislation (New Series)
S.S.G.G.	Straits Settlements Government Gazette
S.S.G.G. (E)	Straits Settlements Government Gazette (Extraordinary)

**COMPARATIVE TABLE**  
**SOCIETIES ACT 1966**

This Act has undergone renumbering in the 2020 Revised Edition. This Comparative Table is provided to help readers locate the corresponding provisions in the last Revised Edition.

<b>2020 Ed.</b>	<b>2014 Ed.</b>
<b>25—(2)</b>	<b>25—(1A)</b>
(3)	(2)