

Singapore ranks high globally in fight against corruption

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Singapore has maintained its high global score in its fight against corruption even as graft has become more pervasive in the rest of the world, according to the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released by Transparency International (TI) on Thursday. PHOTO: REUTERS

SINGAPORE has maintained its high global score in its fight against corruption even as graft has become more pervasive in the rest of the world, according to the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released by Transparency International (TI) on Thursday.

The city-state scored 85 on graft watchdog TI's 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index, which uses a scale that ranges from zero, for highly corrupt, to 100, for very clean. It is the only Asian country that made it to the global top 10.

Denmark and New Zealand shared the pole position, with a score of 87, in the CPI, which ranked 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption. Finland came in third, with a score of 86 after gaining one point compared to the previous year. It was followed by Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland in the fourth position, with a score of 85.

In 2018, Singapore shared the third position with Finland, Sweden and Switzerland; all scoring 85.

Elsewhere, the CPI 2019 revealed more than two-thirds of countries – along with many of the world's most advanced economies – were stagnating or showing signs of backsliding in their anti-corruption efforts. They scored below 50, with an average score of only 43.

Since 2012, only 22 countries have significantly improved their scores, including Estonia, Greece and Guyana. Twenty-one have significantly declined, including Australia, Canada and Nicaragua.

"The current state of corruption speaks to a need for greater political integrity in many countries," TI said.

"Our research shows several of the most advanced economies cannot afford to be complacent if they are to keep up their anti-corruption momentum. Four G-7 (Group of Seven) countries score lower than last year: Canada (-4), France (-3), the UK (-3) and the US (-2). Germany and Japan have seen no improvement, while Italy gained one point," TI said.

To have any chance of curbing corruption, governments must strengthen checks and balances, limit the influence of big money in politics and ensure broad input in political decision-making, TI said. Public policies and resources should not be determined by economic power or political influence, but by fair consultation and impartial budget allocation, it stressed.