

# S'pore least corrupt country in Asia; ranks third globally

Republic is the only Asian country to make it to top 10 in global survey

**Justin Ong**  
Political Correspondent

Singapore has again made it to the top ranks of the least corrupt countries in the world based on a global survey released annually. The Republic, along with Finland, Switzerland and Sweden, scored 85 points each, tying for third place in the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index released by the global anti-graft movement, Transparency International, yesterday. Denmark and New Zealand earned 88 points each to tie for top spot among the 180 countries and territories surveyed. Singapore took top spot in Asia,

the only Asian country to make it to the top 10. Transparency International chair Delia Ferrerira Rubio said the Covid-19 pandemic in the past year was as much a health and economic crisis as that of corruption, which the world was failing to manage. "Those with higher levels of corruption have been less able to meet the challenge," she noted. "But even those at the top of the (index) must urgently address their role in perpetuating corruption at home and abroad." Corruption often intensifies the effects of a crisis and when combined with a public health emergency like Covid-19, poses a threat to lives and livelihoods, said Transparency International (TI). The Berlin-based non-governmental organisation cited its own research from 2019, which found corruption deprives the

## Top 10 least corrupt countries

Rank	Country/territory	Score
1	Denmark	88
1	New Zealand	88
3	Singapore	85
3	Finland	85
3	Sweden	85
3	Switzerland	85
7	Norway	84
8	Netherlands	82
9	Germany	80
9	Luxembourg	80

Source: 2020 CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX, BY TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL. STRAITS TIMES GRAPHIC

global health sector of over US\$500 billion (S\$666 billion) annually.

Countries that perform well on the index invest more in healthcare, are better able to provide universal health coverage and are less likely to violate democratic norms and institutions or the rule of law, added TI. For instance, Uruguay, which scored the highest (71) in Latin America, had a robust epidemiological surveillance system aiding its response to the coronavirus, it said.

At the other end of the scale, Bangladesh – with a score of 26 – was rife with bribery in health clinics, misappropriated aid and corrupt procurement of medical supplies.

Since 2012, Singapore has not scored below 84 points or ranked lower than seventh in the index, which is derived from 13 expert assessments and surveys of business

executives. The situation in Singapore remains well under control with corruption-related reports on a downward trend, and public sector cases remaining low over the years, said the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) in a statement yesterday.

It noted that its biennial public perception survey of over 1,000 respondents in Singapore, most recently conducted last year, found that 94 per cent rated local corruption control efforts to be effective – up from 92 per cent in 2018.

"Our success comes from the public's vigilance and resolve in keeping corruption at bay as a nation. We must not let our guard down in our fight against corruption despite the disruptions from the Covid-19 pandemic," said CPIB director Denis Tang.

The next least corrupt place in Asia in the TI survey was Hong Kong, which came in at 11th place with 77 points.

More than two-thirds of all the countries attained less than 50 points, with the average score being 43.

Nearly half of those on the index have remained stagnant on it for almost a decade – indicating stalled government efforts to tackle the root causes of corruption, said Transparency International.

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# NSF's heatstroke death: Commanders dealt with for breaching regulations

**Lim Min Zhang**

The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) regrets that the commanders involved in the incident that caused Corporal First Class (CFC) Dave Lee's death failed to ensure the well-being of soldiers under their care, said the Ministry of Defence (Mindef). In a Facebook post yesterday,

Mindef said the commanders who breached training and discipline regulations in the 2018 incident "failed in their duties and have been dealt with accordingly".

"Safety of our soldiers is a core value and should never be compromised during training," it said. It added: "CFC (Corporal First Class) Lee was an exemplary soldier who served with commitment. His passing is a sad loss to his family and to the Singapore

Armed Forces. We express our deep condolences to the late CFC Lee's family."

The post came a day after statements that were dealt to seven Coroners Kamala Ponnampalam issued findings into the full-time national serviceman's (NSF) death, including how he died of heatstroke and that there was no basis to suspend CFC Lee, who was 19, was a guardsman from the 1st Battalion Singapore Guards who collapsed af-

ter completing an 8km fast march at Beak Camp on April 18, 2018. Among the lapses in the incident was how CFC Lee, who was seen to be having difficulty walking and speaking after crossing the finish line at 8.25am, was evacuated only much later at 9.05am.

This delay in the evacuation was a contributing factor in CFC Lee's death, the court heard earlier this month. Mindef reiterated the punishment that were dealt to seven commanders involved, including Captain Tan Baoshu, the supervising officer of the fast march, who was charged in the State Courts in October 2018 for causing the death of CFC Lee by a rash act. The Courts granted him a discharge not amounting to an acquittal in January last year after he was

diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer.

Six other servicemen, who were referred by the police to Mindef for investigation into breaches of military law, were convicted and sentenced in military court after pleading guilty.

"They are not fit for and have been removed from positions of command," said Mindef yesterday.

Since the incident, the SAF has enhanced its heat injury management and prevention protocols in line with recommendations from external panels, the ministry added.

"The SAF will continually strive to improve our safety systems to achieve zero training fatalities even as we train our soldiers to defend Singapore against all threats."

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Mindef said Corporal First Class Dave Lee was an exemplary soldier who served with commitment. He collapsed after completing an 8km fast march on April 18, 2018.

# SME donates \$100,000 to ST School Pocket Money Fund

Mr Leong Yoke Ming, managing director of Express Tech Manufacturing, handing a mock cheque of \$100,000 to Mr Zakir Hussain, a board trustee of STSPMF and ST's Singapore editor, at SPH News Centre yesterday. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

Even as many companies are impacted by the economic and financial ramifications brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, one tool- ing solutions provider felt an even greater need to help the less fortunate.

Express Tech Manufacturing made a donation of \$100,000 to The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund (STSPMF) yesterday.

Mr Leong Yoke Ming, managing director of the firm, said: "Our intention was to reach out and to help as many children from low-income families as we could."

"With a charitable initiative like STSPMF, there is a platform for fellow Singaporeans to come together and show our community spirit to the families that need it most during this challenging time," he added.

This is the first time the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) is donating to the fund.

Founded in 1998, Express Tech fund has helped 180,000 cases specialises in the design and fabrication of precision tools needed for the plastic and die-casting in-

dustries, and in the production of cars. The company has manufacturing facilities in Singapore and China.

Mr Leong said the firm remains committed to contributing to society, despite sales dipping about 2 per cent amid the pandemic.

"We were able to make profit and we wanted to share it with those in need, especially during this time," said Mr Leong.

"Choosing ST School Pocket Money Fund was in line with our belief that we should look after children in terms of their education first."

Yesterday, Mr Leong presented mock cheque for the donated amount to Mr Zakir Hussain, board trustee of STSPMF and ST's Singapore editor.

Mr Zakir said: "We are grateful to Express Tech for its generous contribution to help students in need at this time."

Since its launch in 2000, the fund has helped 180,000 children and youth in need, and disbursed over \$80 million. Luqmanul Hakim

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# IMH report ready for suspect in murder of teenager in 2007

**Shaffiq Alkhatib**  
Court Correspondent

Following psychiatric evaluation, the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) has prepared a report on the condition of a man accused of murdering Ms Felicia Teo Wei Ling in 2007.

Details of the IMH report, however, were not revealed yesterday when the accused, Ahmad Danial Mohamed Rafa'ee, now 36, appeared in a district court.

He is represented by Mr Shashi Nathan, Ms Tania Chin and Ms Laura Yeo from law firm Withers KhattarWong.

Ahmad, who is now in remand, will be back in court on March 11.

The Singaporean is accused of murdering Ms Teo, 19, in a Marine Terrace flat on June 30, 2007.

Ahmad is said to have committed the offence along with Ragil Putra Setia Sukmarahjana, now 32.

The two men are believed to have been friends of Ms Teo.

It was not mentioned in court yesterday if there are updates on the whereabouts of her remains.

No mention about investigations surrounding Ragil, who is said to be overseas, was also made.

Ms Teo's disappearance made headlines when her family and friends appealed for help, refusing to believe the teenager had run away.

They last saw her on June 29, 2007, when she left her home in Bras Basah.

Closed-circuit television footage later showed her entering a lift in a Marine Terrace housing block with two men. She was never seen nor heard from again.

Her mother lodged a missing persons police report on July 3 that year.

Officers began investigating the matter and they initially classified Ms Teo's disappearance as a missing persons case.

This was because they did not later find any facts linking the two men to her disappearance. The men had told officers earlier that Ms Teo left the flat of her own accord.

Her friends and family then conducted their own search and more than 200 people got involved.

Meanwhile, the police kept reviewing the case regularly.

The case was referred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in July last year and officers uncovered new leads.

The officers arrested Ahmad on Dec 15 and he was charged with murder in a district court two days later.

Offenders convicted of murder face the death sentence.

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Ahmad Danial Mohamed Rafa'ee is accused of murdering Ms Felicia Teo Wei Ling (far left) in a Marine Terrace flat in 2007. PHOTO: THE NEV PAPER, DANIAL ENEMIKO/ FACEBOOK