

CORRUPTION CONTROL IN SINGAPORE

*Koh Teck Hin**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) is the sole agency responsible for combating corruption in Singapore. CPIB was founded in 1952, even before Singapore gained independence from the British. It is one of the oldest agencies in the world dedicated to fighting corruption, and we developed over the past 58 years to our current state today.

On the whole, the overall strategic approach to fighting corruption applies across the board, with no distinction made on whether it is petty corruption or high level corruption. No exception is made for anyone and there are no 'black areas' where the law cannot deal with. In our experience, the same commitment to action is necessary in order to be successful in curbing corruption at all levels.

II. CORRUPTION SITUATION

Since Singapore attained self-government in 1959, corruption control has been top of the government agenda. When we took over from the British, corruption was prevalent. The Prevention of Corruption Ordinance was weak. Corruption was not a seizable offence and the powers of the anti-corruption bureau were inadequate. Public officers were poorly paid and the population was less educated, did not know their rights and often the way to get things done was through bribery.

For a small city state, it was therefore vital of Singapore to control corruption for our national survival. It was necessary in order to provide a conducive climate and a level playing field to spur economic growth. It is a competitive advantage to attract foreign businesses to invest in our land.

Corruption control has become a strategic tenet of our system of governance. The smooth conduct of government affairs had to be grounded on a rational basis, with clear rules for all to follow. It provides the predictability and confidence for the public to rely on the government to discharge its duty without bias. There had to be no room to tolerate those who hope for windfalls from powerful friends or from greasing contacts in high places. For Singapore to succeed, we had to operate on a meritocratic principle, where people can see that rewards are tied to the efforts that they put in, and not through corrupt means.

There was much reform required. The law was strengthened. Rigorous enforcement took place. Government administration was improved. All these provided the impetus for Singapore's transformation from a corruption-infested city state to the present state we are in, where we enjoy a good reputation worldwide. Singapore has been the third least corrupt country in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, and has been the least corrupt country as ranked by Political Economic & Risk Consultancy (PERC) for the past 10 years.

The mood and resolve to vigorously curb corruption was echoed by the government as early as in 1960 when Parliament declared that it: "(was) determined to take all possible steps to see that all legislative and administrative measures are taken to reduce the opportunities of corruption, to make its detection easier and to deter and punish severely those who are susceptible to it and who engage in it shamelessly."

The strong anti-corruption refrain was heard again and again, including this statement made in 1979 by then PM Lee Kuan Yew, which best explains the need for a corruption-free Singapore: "The moment key

* Deputy Director (Operations), Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB), Singapore.

leaders are less than incorruptible, less than stern in demanding high standards, from that moment the structure of administrative integrity will weaken, and eventually crumble. Singapore can survive only if Ministers and senior officers are incorruptible and efficient [...] Only when we uphold the integrity of the administration can the economy work in a way which enables Singaporeans to clearly see the nexus between hard work and high rewards.”

And again emphasized by the then PM Mr Goh Chok Tong in Parliament in 1993 when he said: “[.....] I have every intention to make sure that Singapore remains corruption free. I will not let standards drop. And everyone should know that corruption in any form will not be tolerated. I expect all Ministers, all MPs and all public officers to set good examples for others to follow ...”

This is still the same position today and the will of government to stamp out corruption wherever it may be is still very strong.

III. POLITICAL WILL

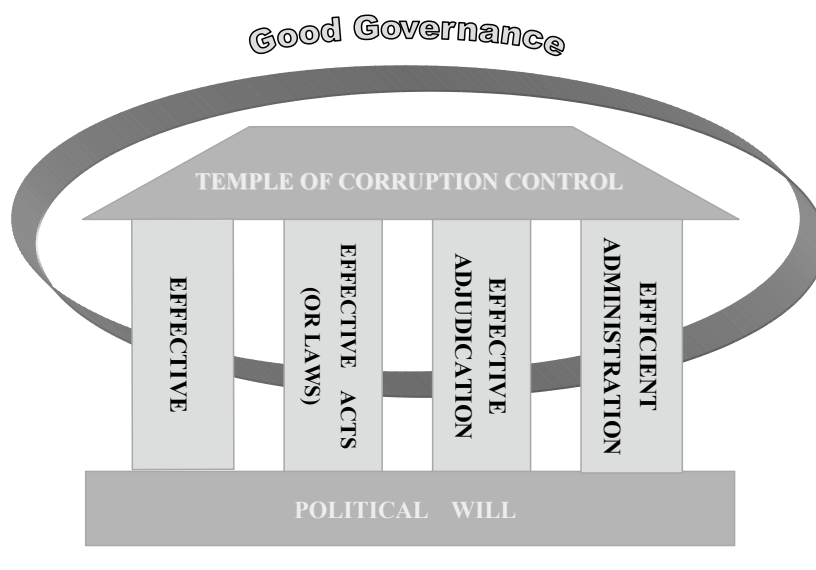
These sentiments reflect the determination and political will for the fight against corruption. Political will is a key ingredient in the transformation effort from Singapore’s corruption infested past as it forms that all important sub-structure, upon which all the super-structures of anti-corruption work rest. It provides the soil and the nutrient which allows the seeds of anti-corruption work to germinate and grow. The government has matched its words with deeds - it mobilized the public, and the entire civil service to fight corruption.

The year 1975 marked a major turning point in the fight against corruption. The Minister of State Wee Toon Boon, then a serving Minister in the Government of the ruling party, was convicted of corruption. Such results demonstrated to the public the resolve of the government to keep Singapore clean. And this has garnered the public support in the ongoing fight against corruption. With the efforts put in and with public support over the years, corruption was thus brought under control.

IV. FRAMEWORK OF CORRUPTION CONTROL

With a strong political will as the foundation, the framework of corruption control consists of four pillars, consisting of 4As, as follows:

- Effective Anti Corruption Acts (or laws)
- Effective Anti Corruption Agency
- Effective Adjudication (or punishment) and
- Efficient Government Administration.



A. Effective Acts (Laws)

Effective laws provide the basis for the fight against corruption. The law must define corruption offences and their punishments and the powers of enforcement against it. As society and the environment changes all the time, it is necessary to review the law periodically to ensure that it is up to date. The powers of enforcement must be well provisioned so that they will have sufficient force and strength.

In Singapore, the principal law is the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA). This governs the primary offences of corruption and the powers of the enforcement agency, which is CPIB. In addition, there is the Corruption, Drugs Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act (CDSA) which provides for the seizure and forfeiture of proceeds which a person convicted of corruption cannot satisfactorily account for. The PCA was enacted in 1960 to replace the previous Prevention of Corruption Ordinance. Since then, the Act had undergone numerous amendments to increase the powers of investigation of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Officers, enhance punishments for corruption and to plug loopholes to prevent exploitation by criminals.

The law must support law enforcement with a cutting edge. This is vital as corruption offences are particularly difficult offences to deal with. Unlike general crime where there is a victim who tells us everything that happened, in corruption offences, both the giver and the receiver are guilty parties who have the motivation to hide and not tell the truth. This makes investigation and evidence gathering more challenging. To be successful, the law must provide sufficient teeth for law enforcement.

The principal law we use is the Prevention of Corruption Act. The following are the distinctive features which may differ from anti-corruption laws in other countries:

- (i) The Act also allows CPIB to investigate corruption in both the public and private sectors and we can deal with both the giver and the receiver. We have dealt with cases in the private sector since the beginning. In some countries, anti-corruption agencies do not deal with private sector. It is of strategic importance for Singapore to keep Singapore companies clean because if not, other countries will not want to trade with Singapore and they will not want to invest money in Singapore. We also deal with givers of bribes. If we don't, they may continue to give bribes and escape punishment and this will worsen the corruption situation due to the demand-supply dynamics.
- (ii) There is a presumption clause – presumption of corruption when a public officer is found to have received bribes. What this means is that a public officer charged in court has the duty to explain to the court that what he or she received was not received corruptly. If he or she fails to explain to the satisfaction of the court, he or she will be presumed to have received the money corruptly. Of course, we do not just depend on this to secure conviction but we will bring all the evidence we have to court and this presumption clause is an additional help for the prosecution.
- (iii) Next, an acceptor of a bribe will be considered guilty even if he or she, in fact, had no power, right or opportunity to return a favour to the bribe giver. This came about because some corrupt offenders took bribes and then were unable to deliver the expected favour. Even so, they should not escape punishment.
- (iv) The Act forbids the use of customary practices, for example, giving/accepting of 'red packets' in Chinese New Year as an excuse for giving/accepting bribes. No one can go to court and be excused by saying that the bribe, disguised as a 'red packet', is goodwill money and nothing illegal. In the past, CPIB was very busy during Chinese New Year and had to look out for bribes disguised as goodwill money. Nowadays, with the enforcement actions taken, the public knows and offenders will not try to use the festive occasion as a camouflage for bribe taking.
- (v) The Act also empowers the Court to order bribe receivers to pay a penalty equal to the amount of bribe received apart from punishment in the form of fines and/or imprisonment terms. This means if accused took \$1 million dollars, he or she has to surrender back that amount. This emphasized the principle that the accused ought not to enjoy any benefit from any corrupt activity.
- (vi) When a person is found to have committed corruption offence, the Principal could recover the amount of the bribe as a civil debt. An example is the manager of a multi-national company (MNC)

convicted of a corruption offence for receiving kickbacks for contracts he granted to others. He was sentenced to 10 months' imprisonment and ordered to pay a penalty of about \$300,000, being the total of bribes received by him. After the sentencing, the MNC commenced civil action under the Prevention of Corruption Act to recover the bribes from the Manager. The manager appealed to the Court of Appeal against the claim on the ground that he had already paid penalty to the State for the bribes he had received and he could not be liable to pay the claim to the MNC, otherwise it would be tantamount to making him pay twice for the same bribes. However, his appeal was dismissed by the Court of Appeal. The court ruled that this was not double jeopardy and the law allowed for it. The manager is thus still liable to pay the MNC.

- (vi) The Act renders Singapore citizens liable for punishment for corrupt offences committed outside Singapore and to be dealt with as if the offences had been committed in Singapore. We have dealt with cases where Singaporeans commit corruption abroad and prosecuted them in Singapore.

Besides the PCA, there was enactment of the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act, CDSA in short, in 1999. The principle for the Act was to ensure that corruption does not pay. It also covers the confiscation of benefits not only from corruption but also drug offences and other serious crimes. The CDSA provides the Court with powers to confiscate pecuniary resources and properties when a person is convicted of a corruption offence and cannot satisfactorily account for those resources to be confiscated. The objective is to ensure that the perpetrators will not benefit from corruption.

The Parliament has also enacted the Parliament (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act to ensure that Members of Parliament will not benefit from a debate in the House in which he or she has a pecuniary interest. It has also enacted The Political Donation Act to ensure candidates standing for political election declare donations they received.

Other statutes regulating Government bodies have also incorporated provisions which deter corruption. One such provision is in the Customs Act which specifically provides for penalties for receiving bribes, and presumes any monies in the possession of a Customs Officer which cannot be accounted for to be corruptly obtained.

B. Effective Enforcement

Having tough laws is no guarantee that there is effective enforcement. If there are tough laws but lax enforcement, corruption will still flourish because the corrupted escape detection and investigation. The situation will be like having a good battle plan but poor troops. It is therefore crucial to devote priority and attention to setting up an effective enforcement agency.

In Singapore, CPIB is the only agency empowered to investigate corruption offences. Any other law enforcement agency which comes across or receives reports on corruption will have to hand over the case to CPIB.

CPIB has independence of action. We can investigate any person or corporation in government or the private sector, however high in the hierarchy they may be. CPIB reports directly to the Prime Minister so as to block any undue interference from any quarters and to ensure that CPIB favours no one particular individual, department or agency but operates without fear or favour, regardless of colour, creed or social status. In fact, CPIB's independence of action was guaranteed by the Constitution, with provision for the elected President of Singapore to open the doors for investigation to proceed should the government of the day block CPIB.

Our Bureau slogan "Swift and Sure" is the message to all corrupt offenders that there will be swift action, certainty of results and justice will take its course. CPIB has always endeavoured to be a crack investigative agency, purpose-driven and committed fully to our mission of "combat(ing) corruption through swift and sure action". Swift action suggests promptness of action, speed and timeliness while sure action suggests certainty of action, resoluteness and result orientedness.

Having a strong capability is easier said than done. Our current success does not guarantee future

success. In a way, it is a race against the corrupt and the criminal minded as they resort to use of technology and more sophisticated modus operandi to commit corruption. There are more and more ways to hide corrupt proceeds. It is incumbent on the enforcement agency to build enough capability to deal with them. For example, in terms of computer forensic capability – we need to have the ability to extract evidence from computers, financial investigation capability to follow the money trail and uncover hidden corrupt proceeds.

C. Effective Adjudication

Sure detection and strict enforcement of laws, no matter how effective, must however be complemented by effective adjudication. Detection, prosecution and subsequent court conviction have specific deterrence on offenders. This also has a general deterrence on the like-minded. Aided by the tough laws, the judiciary successfully created a regime of punishment that is deterrent enough to hammer home, loud and clear, the message that corruption does not pay.

There is transparency in the justice process as all court proceedings are open, public hearings. Decisions are documented and subject to public scrutiny. Both the prosecution and the defence can appeal against any decision made by the Courts.

Judgments from the court will provide some benchmarks as to the severity of offences and their corresponding sentences. For instance, in a recent Appeal case involving a private banker convicted of corruption involving bribes of \$150,000 (*Wong Teck Long vs PP*), when the accused appealed against his conviction and sentence, the prosecution cross appealed on the sentence, the High Court not only dismissed the accused's appeal but enhanced his original sentence from four months' to 15 months' imprisonment. In passing this judgment, the CJ said: "To safeguard the overall public confidence in the integrity of our banking and financial industry as well as Singapore's reputation as a regional and financial hub, punishment for deplorable and corrupt acts, such as that of the appellant, must be swift and harsh so that a strong message will be sent out to the offender at hand and would-be offenders that Singapore does not, and will not, without exception, condone corruption."

In another corruption case involving short supply of marine bunkers (*PP vs Lim Teck Chye*), as it was a private sector business case (which tend to attract fines rather than imprisonment), the court had this judgment: "It could not be said that only corruption offences involving public servants.... harmed the public interest concern for the preservation of the integrity of the public service and the administration of justice. Corruption offences committed in the private sector may do so as well, as private corporations provided public service functions The corrupt actions of the appellant ... had the potential to adversely affect public confidence in the independence of the marine surveyors and Singapore's bunkering industry. It was therefore untenable to draw a strict line between corruption offences committed in the private sector and those committed in the public arena (for the purposes of sentencing), and a custodial sentence was warranted in this case..."

With the court's sentencing, it has sent a strong message to the corrupted and to would-be offenders to think twice before committing corrupted acts.

As part of sentencing, the court will also impose a financial penalty on the offender equal to the amount of bribes the offender had taken. So this again sends a clear message that the offender is not allowed to enjoy any of his or her ill gotten gains.

On top of this, in cases involving government procurement or contracts, administrative actions are taken to cancel the contract and/or to debar suppliers who were convicted of corruption offences from future government contracts for up to five years.

Apart from criminal sanctions, the Prevention of Corruption Act also provides for recourse to civil suit for recovery of bribe monies in addition to criminal prosecution. This was tested in the court last year. The CPIB had prosecuted a facilities manager in a large private company for corruption. He took bribes of almost \$300,000 in return for awarding contracts. He was convicted and sentenced to 10 months' jail and ordered to pay to the State a penalty of about \$300,000, equal to the amount of bribes he had pocketed. After the prosecution was over, his company brought a civil suit against him to recover the amount of bribes he had accepted whilst employed by them. The accused appealed to the court against this, stating that since

he had been ordered to pay back the penalty, he cannot be asked to pay twice, and on this second occasion through the civil suit. The Court of Appeal dismissed his appeal stating that the law expressly provided for two distinct provisions - a criminal proceeding to disgorge benefits and civil proceedings to recover the bribe monies-and therefore it is possible that there can be a double disgorgement and it can act as a further deterrence against corruption. This sends the message very clearly to corrupt offenders that they will be made to pay heavily for their corrupt activities.

V. EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION & GOOD GOVERNANCE

A. Preventive & Administrative Measures in the Public Sector

Alongside the statutory measures dealing with corrupt offenders, a proactive approach to curb corruption was adopted in the Government. With the full support of Parliament and the Heads of Government departments, strict rules and regulations have been formulated to govern the conduct of public officers. A high standard of discipline is demanded of these officers such as:

- a) a public officer cannot borrow money from any person who has official dealings with him or her;
- b) a public officer's unsecured debts and liabilities cannot at anytime be more than three times his or her monthly salary;
- c) a public officer cannot use any official information to further his or her private interest;
- d) a public officer is required to declare his or her assets at his or her first appointment and also annually;
- e) a public officer cannot engage in trade or business or undertake any part-time employment without approval; and
- f) a public officer cannot receive entertainment or present in any form from members of the public.

The commitment of Ministers and Heads of Government departments similarly resulted in the establishment of administrative measures to reduce the chances of public officers getting involved in corruption and wrongdoings. These measures include:

- a) identifying and removing opportunity for corruption in Government work procedures;
- b) streamlining cumbersome administrative procedures and slashing red tape to provide an efficient and transparent civil service so that no one needs to recourse to corrupt civil servants to get things done;
- c) reviewing public officers' salary regularly to ensure that they are paid adequately and comparable to that of the private sector;
- d) reminding Government contractors at the time when contracts are signed that bribing public officers administering the contract may render their contracts to be terminated. A clause to this effect forms part of the standard contract conditions.

B. Efficient Administration

The last pillar is efficient administration, which is also a key to reducing corruption. An efficient administration is one which values integrity and incorruptibility. The Singapore Civil Service prides itself on living its core values of Integrity, Service and Excellence. Hence, we have put in place measures to ensure that the right persons with the right values are in the service. Another important aspect of an efficient administration is that it can foresee and anticipate the needs of the public (inclusive of businesses) and is able to react appropriately, coming up with measures to meet its customer's needs. If we have tough enforcement, but the government of the day is inefficient in meeting public needs, then opportunities are open for corruption to seep in to 'make things happen.'

The civil service in Singapore initiated major reforms in May 1995 under the "Public Service in the 21st Century" (PS21) to attain sound administrative governance, organizational excellence and service orientedness. Such improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery can act against corruption and reduce its opportunities. This is because a service delivered promptly and with no hassle leaves less room for corruption compared to a service which takes a long time and has tedious processing stages.

Under PS21, there were several major initiatives to reduce bureaucracy and cut red tape, such as:

- **The Pro-Enterprise Panel Movement**
The Pro-Enterprise Panel receives and vets suggestions from the public to help ensure that government rules and regulations are supportive of a pro business environment in Singapore. The panel is led by the Head of Civil Service, with members from the private sector, such as Chief Executive Officers of companies. The public and companies can provide suggestions through the internet (www.pep.gov.sg) and these suggestions may result in changes in the rules and regulations.
- **The Zero-In-Process (ZIP)**
This aims to reduce inefficiencies in services whereby the public has to visit several agencies for related reasons. In the past, issues which cut across agencies were tossed around from one agency to another. The ZIP makes sure that such cases do not slip between the cracks by identifying lead agencies and forming ZIP teams to tackle and propose solutions on difficult cross-agency issues.
- **The POWER (Public Officers Working to Eliminate Red-tape)**
This aims to reduce bureaucracy by eliminating obsolete public sector rules. The goal is to give public officers greater flexibility with operational issues and raise awareness that we should enforce the spirit and intent of the regulations rather than complying with them mindlessly. It also allows public officers to cut red tape whenever they spot it. A POWER website has been set up to receive suggestions from public officers and to channel them to the respective regulators for follow up action.
- **The Cut-Red Tape Movement**
Under this, civil servants are encouraged to reduce red tape within the government. Through the internet, the private sector and public can write to the government with suggestions on cutting of red tape. Such feedback can promote transparency and reduce business costs. There is a Cut Waste website where the public can submit their observations/suggestions on areas where government can cut expenditure. The government ministry concerned will have to respond to the public's query and have their reply posted in the website for all to see. This helps to keep government on its toes and help to minimize wastage of government spending, if any.

The Singapore Government's main aim of undertaking the PS21 initiative is to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of its public services. Nonetheless, it has an important side benefit of corruption prevention. Firstly, by empowering and engaging officers for continuous improvement, we hope that the public servant becomes more engaged. An engaged officer takes pride in his or her work and is less likely to succumb to corruption. Secondly, by cutting red tape, making services easier and more accessible, it provides less opportunity for public officers to ask for bribes to grease a transaction. By seeking feedback from the public and being transparent in its policies and service standards, it leaves little room for public officers to solicit for bribes.

A parallel move to upgrade the civil service and to position the government to better serve the nation in the digital age was also embarked upon through the e-Government Action Plans (eGAP). The first such plan was from 2000 - 2003, the second from 2003 - 2006 and we are now in the third plan known as iGov2010, running from 2006 - 2010. iGov aims at delivering excellent public services as well as connecting the citizens to the government. Electronic services already in place or to be implemented target at providing higher levels of convenience, efficiency and effectiveness for the public. E-governance measures serve to engage citizens more widely through use of infocomm technology.

One of the many e-services initiatives is the introduction of the e-Citizen portal where citizens can access government services from the comfort of their homes, eg to lodge a police report or to renew their passports. They can also use it to lodge a corruption report with CPIB. The service standards of various departments are also published in the portal so that the public can know what to expect. Another e-government initiative is the business.gov.sg portal. This portal provides the public with information and assistance in planning their businesses and starting companies. One of the services provided by this portal is the online business licensing service (OBLs). With OBLs, someone starting his or her new business can

apply and get the relevant permits and licenses from the comfort of his or her home or office without him or her having to physically go to the various government departments. Before OBLs, when a business wished to apply for various licenses, it needs to go to different departments and some licenses required them to go to a few departments. For example, to get a hawkers license one has to go to the Ministry of Environment and the Urban Redevelopment Authority as well. After the implementation of this system, all the applicant has to do is to log onto this system and submit the applications on-line and the system will route it to the relevant departments, hence saving time for the applicant. Today members of the public can apply, renew or terminate different types of license through this on-line portal. Some 69 licences from 19 government agencies are on OBLs. The turnaround time to obtain all the licences was cut from 21 days to just eight days. This service was very well received and in 2005, it has won the prestigious UN Public Service Award.

Another service is the Gebiz – the government procurement portal on the internet. Today, most Government procurement is done through the internet and it is open for all, including international businesses who wish to take part. In Gebiz, the posting of the tender requirements is online, the submission of the bids is online, the deadline is controlled by the computer and the results at the end of tender are automatically published for all to see. This leaves little room for corruption or abuse compared to the manual system.

Although the primary driver behind our e-government action plan was not about corruption control, it does have such an important side benefit. It reduces the visits to government service counters, service turnaround time and cost of delivery. If we think about it, if a government service can now be obtained from the comfort of our homes, at the click of a mouse, what chance is there for someone to interfere in between to solicit a bribe for the purpose of greasing the transaction.

This inter-relationship between efficiency and corruption control is succinctly summed up in an old article of Bob Crew of South China Morning Post when he said: “The theory is that the administration is so tight, so efficiently run and controlled, that there is no room for corruption which thrives much better in an inefficient administration in which there are plenty of loopholes for it to flourish unnoticed and unchecked, where there is scope for hoodwinking and beating the system.”

This was an article from way back in the 1970s but it is still relevant today.

VI. REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

A. Study Visits

As the sole anti-corruption agency in Singapore, CPIB has been the destination for various study visits and attachments for public officials and counterpart agencies, including countries in the Asia Pacific Region. The visitors are attracted to Singapore mainly because of its international reputation for being effective in controlling corruption. In the spirit of regional co-operation and networking, CPIB hosted official visits and attachments by Government officials from various countries. In recent years, officials visited CPIB were from countries such as China, Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Macau, Hong Kong, Australia, Kenya, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Kuwait, Jordan, Solomon Islands, Qatar, Russian Federation, Pakistan etc.

To be in the know of the latest international development in anti-corruption matters which could impact on Singapore, CPIB has increased its participation in various corruption-related overseas conferences/seminars.

CPIB has also actively established good working relationships with its counterparts in the region and beyond. Assistance is also provided to foreign counterparts in the area of law enforcement, where appropriate, with the understanding of reciprocal assistance from them in the future.

B. Specialized Workshops

CPIB regularly organizes an international workshop, known as Anti-Corruption Expertise (ACE) Workshop with regional participation. We have conducted three runs so far with the following themes – “Excellence in Investigation” in August 2006, “Excellence in Computer Forensics” in September 2007 and “Excellence in Management of Anti Corruption Agencies” in October 2008. Speakers at the workshops

came from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Korea, United States, United Kingdom, Australia and France. The aim of the workshops is to share Singapore's experience and expertise and to bring professionals together for cross-learning. CPIB will continue to organize ACE workshops in the future to benefit officials from the region.

We have also conducted a customized Anti Corruption Management and Investigation Course – a five-day programme done for regional counterparts at cost recovery basis. Officials from Bhutan's Anti-Corruption Commission and from Cambodia's Anti Corruption Unit have attended.

C. International Fora

CPIB is actively engaged in international fora and meetings that discuss corruption matters. It is a pioneer member of the ADB-OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative, which meets twice a year. In 2008, Singapore hosted the 12th meeting as well as the 6th Regional Anti-Corruption Conference where more than 120 participants took part. CPIB has joined the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA). It is a member of APEC Anti-Corruption Task Force (ACT) and last year, we chaired the discussions of the ACT. Within the ASEAN region, there is a MOU on Preventing and Combating Corruption amongst anti corruption agencies of the ASEAN region which CPIB is involved in. CPIB is one of the first four agencies which signed the MOU in Dec 2004 in Jakarta, along with the agencies of Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei. The objective of the MOU was to enhance mutual sharing, capacity building and strengthen collaborative efforts in anti-corruption matters.

VII. LESSONS LEARNT

Based on our experience in combating corruption, I like to highlight the following learning points.

Firstly, mere systems, structures and processes do not necessarily provide the template for success. The magic is in the sincerity of purpose; genuine efforts - not less than honest labour - and the overall operating climate. CPIB has the structures, systems and processes that were allowed to work, given the right operating environment created by a strong political will. Unless the will to succeed is forged, much of any anti-corruption programme will remain a passive idle declaration. Clearly, it is as much a question of fixing the hearts and minds as it is a question of fixing the system.

Secondly, it is strategic to focus on the three related areas of enforcement, legislation (or law) and adjudication, as a package. Any weaknesses in any one link in this three-link chain can be fatal. Strong and effective legislation that will make detection and conviction of offenders easier is tactical, as this provides the cutting edge for more effective enforcement and ultimately, more effective adjudication. All three areas are essential in anti-corruption work. If one piece is ineffective, the whole is ineffective.

Thirdly, we adopted, from the onset, a simple, no-frills and largely enforcement-oriented approach, in the belief that deterrence through sure detection, prosecution and ultimately conviction in a court of law is the most tactically tenable and strategically sound plan of action. By taking strong action against offenders, we avoided being side-tracked unnecessarily by the bark when we should be directing efforts on the bite. The maxim is: "Keep it simple, do it well". Early success was thus possible through focused action and unity of purpose. Success, eventually, begets success. This generates a momentum of its own, creating a virtuous spiral.

Fourthly, public support is vital in any anti-corruption programme, and is best won through successful action against the corrupt, regardless of colour, creed or station in life and executed without fear or favour, firmly and fairly. Such clear, demonstrable success is the surest way of winning public assent.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Corruption is a problem that needs to be dealt with in both the public sector and private sector. Singapore has adopted a total approach in both sectors for a long time.

Today, CPIB has to a large extent helped to curb corruption in Singapore. It has a crucial role to play in keeping the country clean, and our tireless efforts to prevent and control corruption and uphold a high

standard of transparency would not have been possible without capitalizing on the four pillars of anti-corruption, namely strict laws, enforcement without fear or favour, tough punishment from the Courts and effective government administration. The anti-corruption measures must be applied consistently across the board, regardless of whether it is petty corruption or high level corruption.

However, we are mindful that our past successes is no guarantee for the future and we do not for a moment think that corruption will never take root in Singapore. We know complacency will lead to a downfall. Therefore, the fight against corruption is still a necessary job for all of us.

I hope my sharing has been useful to you. The experience of Singapore may not be replicated exactly anywhere else as every country has its unique character and circumstances. Nonetheless, corruption is an universal problem common amongst mankind. We therefore have scope for sharing and learning from each other. And we all have a common duty to join hands to fight the disease of corruption and make the world a better place to live in.