

Prime Minister's Office  
Singapore



# CORRUPT PRACTICES INVESTIGATION BUREAU



## **Our Mission Statement**

To combat corruption  
through Swift and Sure,  
Firm but Fair Action

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Singapore is one of the few countries in the world where corruption is under control. This is due mainly to the strong political will to curb corruption, firm actions taken against the corrupt regardless of their status and background and the general public who does not accept corruption as a way of life.

This booklet describes the work of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB).

## **EARLY DAYS**

The CPIB was established in 1952 as an independent body responsible for the investigation and prevention of corruption in Singapore.

Corruption was more or less a way of life in the 1940s and early 1950s. Prior to 1952, all corruption cases were investigated by a small unit in the Singapore Police Force known as the Anti-Corruption Branch. This Branch was not effective, especially in the investigation of corrupt police officers. The CPIB was therefore set up by the government as an organisation separate from the Police, to investigate all corruption cases.

In the early days, the CPIB faced many problems. The anti-corruption laws were inadequate and this had hindered the gathering of evidence against corrupt individuals.

Another problem was the lack of public support. Members of the public did not co-operate with the CPIB as they were skeptical of its effectiveness and were fearful of reprisals.

The situation changed after the People's Action Party came into power in 1959. Firm action was taken against corrupt officials, many of whom were dismissed from the service. Others left the service on their own to avoid investigation. Public confidence in the CPIB grew as people realised that the Government was sincere in its anti-corruption drive.

## **LEGISLATION**

In 1960, a more effective legislation against corruption was introduced. The anti-corruption law, namely, the Prevention of Corruption Act, was overhauled. Additional powers of investigation were given to the CPIB and the punishment was also enhanced.

The Prevention of Corruption Act, Chapter 241, today provides the CPIB with all the necessary powers to fight corruption.

In 1989, the Corruption (Confiscation of Benefits) Act was passed. The Act empowers the court to freeze and confiscate properties and assets obtained by corrupt offenders.

In 1999, the Corruption (Confiscation of Benefits) Act was replaced with a new legislation called the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act. New offences of money laundering have been introduced, in addition to giving the same powers to the court for the freezing and confiscation of properties and assets by offenders.

## **FUNCTIONS**

The functions of the CPIB are:

- to receive and investigate complaints alleging corrupt practices;
- to investigate malpractices and misconduct by public officers with an undertone of corruption; and
- to prevent corruption by examining the practices and procedures in the public service to minimise opportunities for corrupt practices.

## **ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The CPIB is under the charge of the Prime Minister's Office.

Organisationally, the CPIB has two divisions (see Annex A on organisation structure), namely:

- The Operations Division
- The Admin & Specialist Support Division

### **Operations Division**

The Operations Division executes the main function of the Bureau in investigating offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act. It comprises 4 investigation units, one of which is the elite Special Investigation Team (SIT) which handles the more complex and major cases.

Completed investigation papers are submitted to the Public Prosecutor based on the available evidence. Under the Prevention of Corruption Act, no prosecution can be instituted except by or with the written consent of the Public Prosecutor.

Cases against public officers with insufficient evidence to support a court prosecution are referred (with the concurrence of the Public Prosecutor) to the head of the department concerned for disciplinary action.

An Intelligence Department was established under the Operations Division. It gathers and collates intelligence and undertakes field research to support the investigation needs of the Operations Division.

## **Administration & Specialist Support Division**

### **Administration Unit**

It is responsible for administrative and personnel matters, provides screening services to government departments and statutory boards and undertakes strategic planning for the Bureau.

### **Prevention & Review Unit**

It carries out reviews of the work procedures of corruption-prone government departments to identify the administrative weaknesses, which could facilitate corruption and malpractices, and thereafter recommends remedial, and preventive measures.

### **Computer Information System Unit**

It undertakes computerisation projects and develops application systems to manage the records and enhance the effectiveness of the Operations Division.

### **Plans & Projects Unit**

It undertakes staff work relating to plans, projects and policies.

# **CORRUPTION COMPLAINTS**

## **Reporting Procedure**

People who have information on corruption or wish to lodge a report can call personally at the CPIB at the following address:

**2 Lengkok Bahru  
Singapore 159047**

They can also telephone the Duty Officer round-the-clock to give information or seek advice on matters relating to corruption at the following number:-

**Tel: 63760000**

The CPIB also welcomes written information.

## **Malicious Complaints**

Any person who makes a complaint against anyone or gives any information in writing knowing this to be false, commits an offence under Section 28 of the Prevention of Corruption Act and will not go unpunished. Such a person when convicted, can be fined up to \$10,000 or jailed up to one year, or both. The CPIB takes a very serious view of malicious complaints and will spare no effort to trace the "poison-pen writer" and prosecute him.



## **PUBLIC SECTOR CORRUPTION**

The CPIB concentrates on the public sector in its efforts to eradicate corruption. Particular attention is paid to law enforcement officers and officers who, by the nature of their jobs, are more susceptible to the crime.

The Government's anti-corruption stand is clear. It will not hesitate to bring whoever is corrupt to court, irrespective of his rank or status.

## **PRIVATE SECTOR CORRUPTION**

Although the CPIB gives priority to the eradication of corruption in the public sector, the Prevention of Corruption Act also empowers it to investigate corruption in the private sector.

Private sector corruption usually involves the payment or acceptance of illegal commissions or kickbacks, which, in some cases, can be quite substantial.

Many businessmen still regard the payment of illegal commissions as an accepted business practice. Illegal commissions refer to under-the-counter kickbacks, which the recipient is not allowed by his employer to receive as against legitimate commissions, which he is entitled to under the terms of his employment which his employer expressly approves of.

An example is that of a buyer or purchaser who receives illegal commissions or kickbacks from suppliers. The buyer's duty is to source for and buy the best materials at the lowest prices available on behalf of his company.

If he accepts commissions from the suppliers, he may place his personal gain over the interest of his company's.

His company ends up paying for inferior goods at higher prices because the suppliers mark up their prices to recover the commissions they give. This will ultimately increase the company's costs and lower its competitiveness.

Another example of private sector corruption is that of a bank manager obtaining kickbacks or commissions for granting overdrafts and other banking facilities without first checking the credit worthiness of the applicant. This exposes the bank to an unnecessary security risk.

Acceptance of illegal commissions ultimately increases costs, undermines efficiency and tarnishes the image of the companies concerned. More significantly, such unlawful payments in the private sector will adversely affect investors' confidence in Singapore as a major commercial and financial centre.

Companies should lay down clear guidelines for employees in line with their policy on commissions so as to safeguard fair and honest business transactions and thereby protect the companies' interests.

## **PUNISHMENT**

Any person who offers, accepts or obtains a bribe can be fined up to \$100,000 or sentenced up to five years' imprisonment or both. In addition, the court can impose a penalty equivalent to the amount of bribes accepted.

Any person who accepts or obtains a bribe on behalf of another person also commits an offence as if he had accepted the bribe for himself, and is punishable to the same extent. The same applies to any person who offers a bribe on behalf of another person.

## **PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

The CPIB has taken various measures to reduce opportunities for corruption particularly in the public service.

### **Review of Work Methods**

Cumbersome work methods and procedures are improved upon to avoid delays in the granting of permits and licences and to prevent corrupt public officers from obtaining bribes from members of the public to expedite their approval.

### **Declaration of Non-Indebtedness**

Every public officer is required to declare once a year that he is free from pecuniary embarrassment. An indebted public officer could easily place himself under obligation and be exploited. He is also more likely to succumb to corruption.

### **Declaration of Assets and Investments**

Every public officer is required to declare, when he is first appointed and subsequently annually, his properties and investments in companies, including those of his spouse and dependent children. In addition to this declaration and in respect of acquisition of non-HDB private properties, he has to declare them within a week of the purchase. If the officer owns more than one property that is not in keeping with his salary earnings, he could be queried on how he could have the means to purchase them. If he owns some shares in private companies, he could be asked to divest ownership to prevent a conflict of interest.

## **Non-Acceptance of Gifts**

Public officers are not permitted to receive any present in money or in kind from people having official dealings with them. They are also not permitted to accept any entertainment that will place them under any real or apparent obligation. If a person with whom he has official dealings presents him with any gift, he has to reject it. Where it is not practical to do so (such as a souvenir from a visiting dignitary), the officer can accept the gift and surrender it to his head of department. The officer, however, can retain the gift if he pays for it at the value assessed by the official valuer appointed by the Ministry of Finance.

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION**

As part of the bureau's effort to prevent corruption, talks on the evils of corruption are given to public officers, especially those who work in law enforcement agencies and whose work exposes them to opportunities for bribery and corruption.

## **CONCLUSION**

Corruption is not a way of life in Singapore and Singaporeans generally do not condone it. With the concerted efforts of the political leaders, senior public officers and the CPIB, as well as the negative publicity given to the offenders by the mass media, Singaporeans have come to view corruption as a heinous crime with which they want no association.

The CPIB will always maintain its vigilance and take strong action against corruption to ensure that it will not have a chance to fester and grow in Singapore.

**Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau**

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