

Protect Singapore's legacy of corruption-free system: PM Lee

'The public also plays an important role to maintain our social norms of eschewing corruption.'

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SINGAPORE has, over the years, developed a system and culture that "eschews corruption", and the country's progress depends on its ability to stay clean and corruption-free, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on Tuesday.

Speaking at the opening of the Corruption Reporting and Heritage Centre (CRHC) of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB), he said: "Our founding leaders left us a clean system, built up over more than half-a-century. It's a legacy that we should be proud of and do our utmost to protect."

Mr Lee made the point that Singaporeans expect and demand a clean system, and do not condone giving or accepting "social lubricants" to get things done.

Citizens believe they can be successful in life because they work hard, and not because of special connections or paying extra "fees" to anyone – and this is how things should be, stressed Mr Lee.

He also said that members of the public "readily report" corrupt practices when they encounter them, and trust that the law applies to all and that the government will enforce the laws without fear or favour.

Businesses are confident that the rules are "transparent and fairly applied" in Singapore, while the public service is professional, with officers imbued with the right values.

Public officers are paid "fair and realistic" wages that are benchmarked against those in the private sector, thus reducing the temptation for them to accept bribes.

Mr Lee noted that many countries accept corruption as a "natural state of things" – it is entrenched in the system and impossible to eradicate. Despite the stiff laws against corruption in place, the people in these countries are no longer outraged by corrupt officials and are resigned to the way things are.

He said that even if one batch of



PM Lee speaking with retired CPIB officers (far left) Raymond Ng, 74, and (centre) Yeo Peng Soon, 70, at the opening of CRHC. PHOTO: STRAITS TIMES

The CPIB tables an annual report on corruption to Parliament. Last year, the number of corruption cases fell 11 per cent from what was already an all-time low.

leaders is kicked out, the next group will behave in exactly the same manner.

In contrast, Singapore continues to perform well in international rank-

ings of freedom from corruption, such as the rankings carried out by graft watchdog Transparency International, the World Bank and the Political And Economic Risk Consultancy.

On its part, the CPIB tables an annual report on corruption to Parliament. Last year, the number of corruption cases fell 11 per cent from what was already an all-time low, Mr Lee noted.

The CPIB said it received 808 complaints last year, down from 877 in the year before. Of the 808 cases, 118 or 14.6 per cent were registered for investigation – the lowest in 32 years.

The private sector accounted for 85 per cent of all cases registered for investigation last year, a four percentage point fall from 2015.

The new CRHC on Whitley Road began operations in early January.

Members of the public can walk in to report suspected corrupt practices.

Complaints can also be filed at the CPIB's headquarters in Lengkok Bahru, off Jalan Bukit Merah.

Mr Lee said the CRHC exemplifies the government's attitude towards corruption, and shows that it treats complaints on corruption seriously and transparently.

He reiterated that every complaint on corruption is thoroughly investigated, and that many successful CPIB investigations came from tip-offs from the public.

"The courts, the government and public servants must continue to uphold the highest levels of professionalism and integrity," said Mr Lee.

"But the public also plays an important role to maintain our social norms of eschewing corruption."