

Graft-related reports plunge to five-year low amid pandemic

CPIB attributes this to sharp fall in economic activities in the private sector last year

Jean Iau

Graft-related reports plunged to a five-year low in 2020 amid the Covid-19 pandemic, said the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) yesterday when it released its annual statistics.

They showed that last year's 239 corruption-related reports were down by about 31 per cent from the 350 reported in 2019, and 358 in 2018.

CPIB said this could be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic which caused a sharp fall in economic activities in the private sector.

A CPIB spokesman told The Straits Times the bureau had also come across more instances of bribes being paid via bank transfers. "There is always a digital trail left behind for virtual payments and law enforcement agencies will relentlessly pursue the trail to bring the perpetrators to justice," said the spokesman.

Such forms of payment can be easily traced by the authorities,

noted the director of the Centre for Strategic Cyberspace and International Studies, Mr Anthony Lim.

He told ST: "Bank transfers or PayNow are done through formal systems between formal, official organisations and in a regulated environment so there is a good measure of governance, auditable logs, transparency and proper orderliness and fairness of practice."

The conviction rate for CPIB cases in 2020 remained near perfect at 97 per cent, excluding withdrawals.

One of these convictions involved a police staff sergeant, Mahendran Selvarajoo, 32.

He was jailed for two years for receiving sexual gratification from two women, who were being investigated separately, in return for helping one of them avoid prosecution and helping the other by replying favourably to her employer's purported queries about her case.

Mahendran had also copied the personal videos and folders from their devices to his personal storage devices without authority.

CPIB said that media coverage of the case helped raise public awareness, and led to the bureau receiving information relating to offences of a similar nature involving other people.

It has also increased efforts to engage young people.

Said the spokesman: "Singapore's founding generations have forged a strong anti-corruption culture which has become part of Singapore's DNA. It is important that this zero-tolerance culture is sustained in future generations."

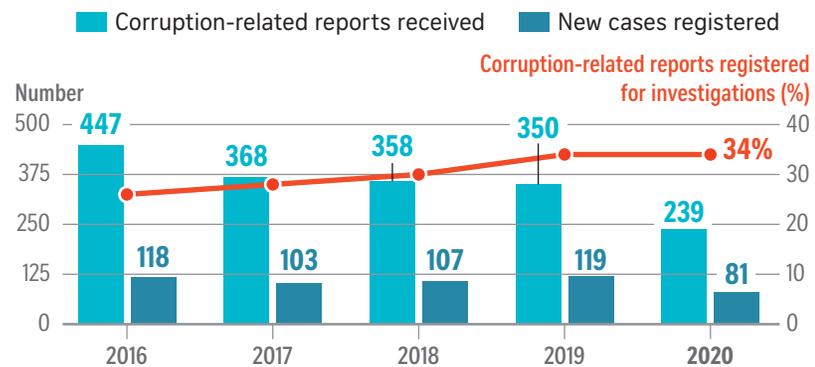
A Republic Polytechnic survey last year showed that close to three-quarters of respondents, in a poll of about 1,000 people aged between 15 and 25, were not aware of CPIB's existence.

It had been formed in 1952 and comes under the Prime Minister's Office.

Following this survey, the bu-

2020 corruption statistics

New cases registered for investigation relative to number of corruption-related reports received



Breakdown of new cases registered by sector



Source: CORRUPT PRACTICES INVESTIGATION BUREAU STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF DIGITAL TRAILS

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CPIB SPOKESMAN, referring to more instances of bribes being paid via bank transfers.

reau launched an e-book aimed at those aged between 13 and 19 last year.

CPIB also worked with students from Nanyang Polytechnic's School of Design & Media to develop an application prototype featuring game design and elements to make anti-corruption materials more interesting.

Mr Denis Tang, director of CPIB, said: "Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, Singapore continues to maintain its low corruption level and good international

standing as one of the least corrupt nations in the world. This requires our constant vigilance and resolute determination to keep corruption at bay."

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• Those with information on corruption cases can contact CPIB anonymously by writing in to CPIB Headquarters at 2 Lengkok Bahru, S159047, by calling 1800-376-0000, by lodging an e-complaint, or e-mailing report@cpib.gov.sg