

Singapore: The best bureaucracy in Asia

It is worthwhile to mention that public sector corruption in Singapore is of the least magnitude. Maybe the country is too small and too strict, out of which bureaucrats have very little scope to get away or escape by committing corruption. Bureaucrats are responsible for both development and revenue projects in any country as well as in Singapore, writes **M Azizur Rahman**

THE Republic of Singapore is a South-East Asian city-state off the southeast tip of the Malay Peninsula. The capital of the Republic of Singapore is "Singapore". Singapore became independent from the United Kingdom (UK) on August 31, 1963. Then Singapore got a merger with Malaysia on September 16, 1963. Singapore became separated from Malaysia on August 9, 1995. The area of Singapore is 710 square kilometres. According to the 2011 Census, population of Singapore is 5,183,700 out of which 3,257,000 or 63% are citizens of Singapore. Density of population in Singapore is 18,943 per square kilometre. Per capita income in Singapore is \$ 59,711 in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). In terms of nominal GDP, per capita income in Singapore is \$ 49,270. Human Development Index (HDI) is very high or stands at 26th with the index of 0.846. According to the above description, about per capita income, income distribution, consumer index, Human Development Index (HDI) and the people's high standard of life and living, we can easily assume that the bureaucracy in Singapore is free from corruption and is very efficient and conducive to the growth and development of Singapore. These are discussed below:

According to a source of Reuters-2012, the civil servants in Singapore are the most efficient compared to those in any other countries in Asia. According to the same source, Indian bureaucracy is a "suffocating" one and is the worst in Asia. Indian civil servants are slow and painful. They are the centre of power at the Centre and State levels. Indian bureaucrats extremely resist any kind of reform by which they may be affected. In Asia, Thailand became the 4th best bureaucracy after a long protest by its people. The government offices and officials in Thailand are associated with corruption, which is a prime source of difficult time for the Thai people and the foreigners in Thailand. The lawmakers in

Singapore and its citizens have acquired a provisional authority to fire the government if it makes the country incur a substantial amount of loss due to its bureaucratic problem, corruption and wrong decisions. According to the same source, Hong Kong has been a country of the 2nd best bureaucracy in Asia. The Chinese people have also been fighting against its bureaucratic corruption for the long period. In 2007, China ranked the 7th in terms of the best bureaucracy in Asia and in 2009, China became the 9th according to the ranking from the most efficient to the least in Asia. According to the Thailand Business News, June 14, 2012, twelve Asian countries and their bureaucracy ratings (from the worst to the best) are as follows:

- 1) India (9.21)
- 2) Vietnam (8.54)
- 3) Indonesia (8.37)
- 4) The Philippines (7.57)
- 5) China (7.11)
- 6) Malaysia (5.89)
- 7) South Korea (5.87)
- 8) Japan (5.77)
- 9) Taiwan (5.57)
- 10) Thailand (5.25)
- 11) Hong Kong (3.53)
- 12) Singapore (2.25)

The government of Singapore plays the vital role in managing the society and developing the economy. Singapore is a public sector economy, where the government is the single player to invest in business and generate a very large employment. Like any other country, public administration in Singapore consists of the elected politicians and non-elected civil servant individuals in each ministry. Most of the development projects are carried out by public enterprises which are free from bureaucratic procedures. The Singaporean parliament delegates the sweeping power to these public enterprises authorized for a review, change, approval and the implementation of the development projects. It is noteworthy that a few Asian countries including Indo-Pak-Bangladesh sub-continent and its bureaucracy have been corrupted after these



became independent from the British regime. Singaporean bureaucracy has not yet been privileged or is able to be corrupted because of its strong law and order and judiciary system. The parliamentarians and civil administration of Singapore resemble that of British model very strictly. The Singapore Government has been able to successfully adapt the British model to its Southeast Asian environment.

The selection procedure of the public service individuals in Singapore is about the same as in the most of other Asian countries. Public service employment is very prestigious in almost all societies and in the society of public sector economy and Singapore in particular. The civil service positions are very competitive in Singapore as in any other Asian country. Civil ser-

vants are selected primarily on their academic and non-academic qualification, training, experience and their intelligence and overall smartness. With all these characteristics civil servants are selected on their performance on the competitive written, viva and psychological test. Then what makes the difference between the best bureaucracy in Singapore from the others in Asia? The analytical expatriates have argued that the Singapore public service was considered entirely free from corruption. The Singapore bureaucrats are provided with relatively high incentive financially. More importantly, they work in a culture of Singapore where they are the national leaders and they are dedicated to social and national values. The Corrupt Practice Investigation Bureau (CPIB) like

governmental anti-corruption agency in Singapore, has been enjoying a sweeping power of investigation and direct support from the prime minister. Everybody including the bureaucrats would like to be financially solvent.

In other words, if you are not poor you are expected to get less involved in corruption. Poverty is a major factor of corruption or necessity knows no law etc are absent in the society of Singapore. A relatively high salary paid to the public officials in Singapore has been very helpful to promote official honesty. "The higher the salary the lower corruption" has been working very well in Singapore. The national culture and the administrative model in Singapore has been a mixed reflection of two traditions: the mainstream people in Singapore are of

Chinese race. Historically they are used to be under the control of British rule. The cultural combination of Chinese Confusian tradition and the British administrative civil service recruit the top graduates of the universities for the civil service positions. Once again, public service individuals in Singapore are talented, qualified and smart. They are also awarded scholarship for a higher training at home and abroad. It may be noted that Singapore belongs to the public sector. In other words, the country is small but the Government is big. Singapore is an exceptional case where the large public sector has been working better than the other countries of large public sector including India.

It is worthwhile to mention that public sector corruption in Singapore is of the least magnitude. Maybe the country is too small and too strict, out of which bureaucrats have very little scope to get away or escape by committing corruption. Bureaucrats are responsible for both development and revenue projects in any country as well as in Singapore. In Singapore, bureaucrats are given the responsibilities of overseeing the development projects in the sectors of industry, manufacturing, trading, import and export and even the construction of housing estates. Once again, public sector bureaucrats have been carrying out the private sector responsibilities. The country of Singapore is small. Its Government has been doing many development businesses including the housing to make money and to maximise the government's revenue income which, in turn, has been helping the government to provide a better public service. Finally, "small is beautiful" is what is all about the best bureaucracy in Singapore.

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