

Singapore's Experience in Public Service Capacity Building for Development



**11th Session of the
UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration**

(inputs from Vernie Oliveira , Civil Service College)

Challenges at Independence

- **14% unemployment rate in 1959.**
 - Impending loss of 20% of jobs through closure of British military bases.
- **Annual population growth at 4.4% – one of the highest in the world (population around 1.6 million).**
- **25% of people lived under the poverty line.**



Status Today

- **Per Capita Income: US\$50,123 (2011).**
 - **Trebled between 1965 and 1977.**
- **Full employment by the mid-1970s.**
- **3rd most competitive city in the world (Economist Intelligence Unit 2012).**
- **Rate of home ownership: 90%.**

Principles of Governance for Strong Public Administration

- **Pragmatism**
 - **Avoidance of Welfarism**
 - **Constant Re-evaluation**
 - **Whole-of-Government Coordination**
 - **Honesty**
 - **Development of Human Capital**
- 
- An aerial, grayscale photograph of a modern cityscape. In the foreground, a large, curved stadium with a distinctive roof structure is visible. To its right, a large, multi-story building with a grid-like facade stands prominently. The background shows a dense urban area with various buildings and infrastructure, all under a clear sky.

Pragmatism

Balancing capitalist economic development, social harmony, and security

- E.g. 1: Balancing religious freedom and socio-economic development: Singapore's *madrasas*.
- E.g. 2: Mix of market discipline and state intervention in governance: aggressive pursuit of FDI, role of public agencies in development.

Avoidance of Welfarism

- Eschewing a Culture of Dependency

- **E.g. 1: Providing social insurance through the Central Provident Fund**
- **E.g. 2: Using co-payment to manage demand for public services (university tuition, healthcare – Medisave and Medishield).**

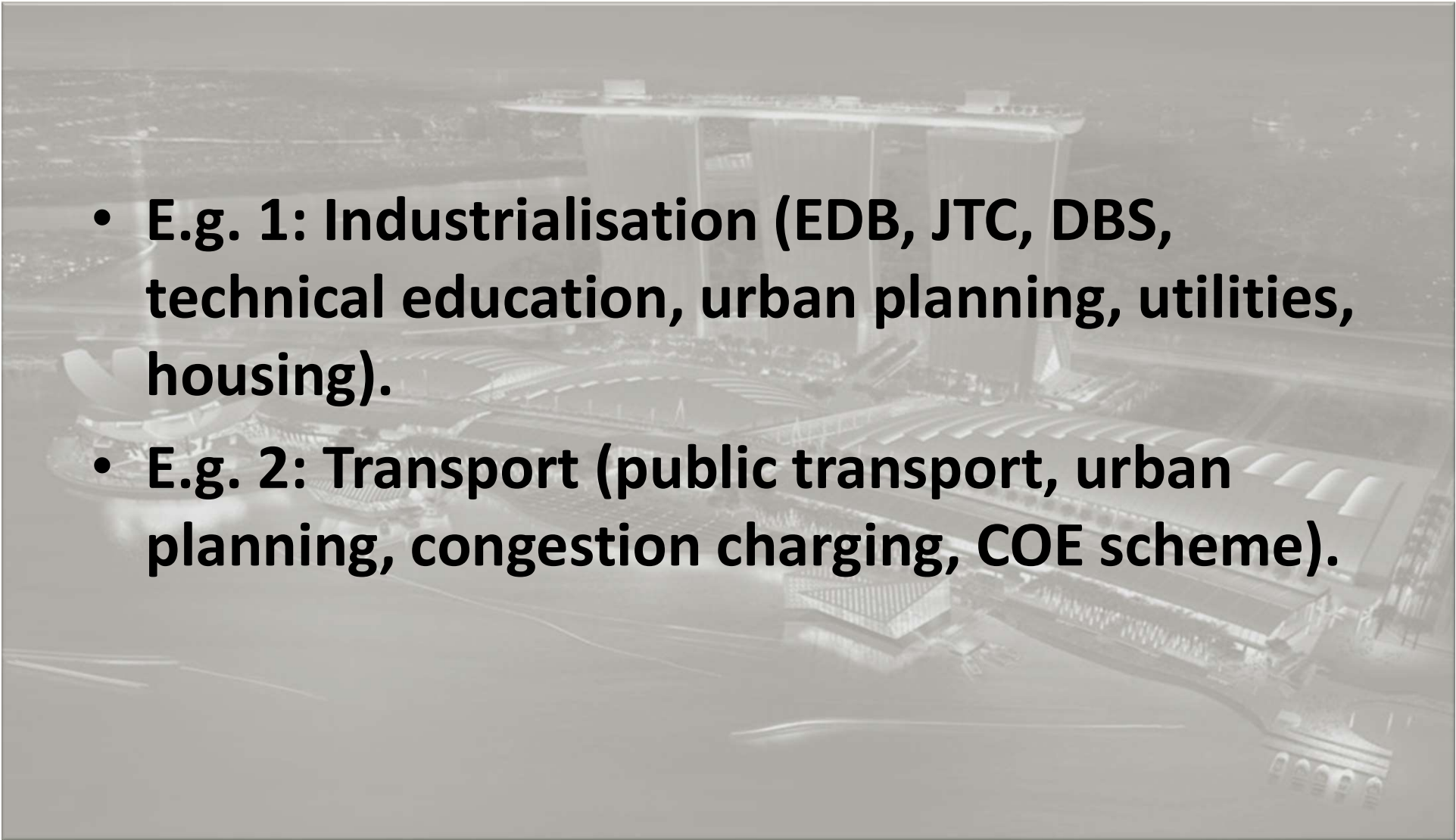
Constant Re-Evaluation

- Reviewing the Purpose of Policy and the Relevance of Institutions

- E.g. 1: Introduction of Workfare in 2006.
- E.g. 2: *PS21* and increased autonomy for public agencies (Ministry of Finance budgeting procedures).
- E.g. 3: Re-inventing the role of the Singapore Prisons Service.

Whole-of-Government Coordination

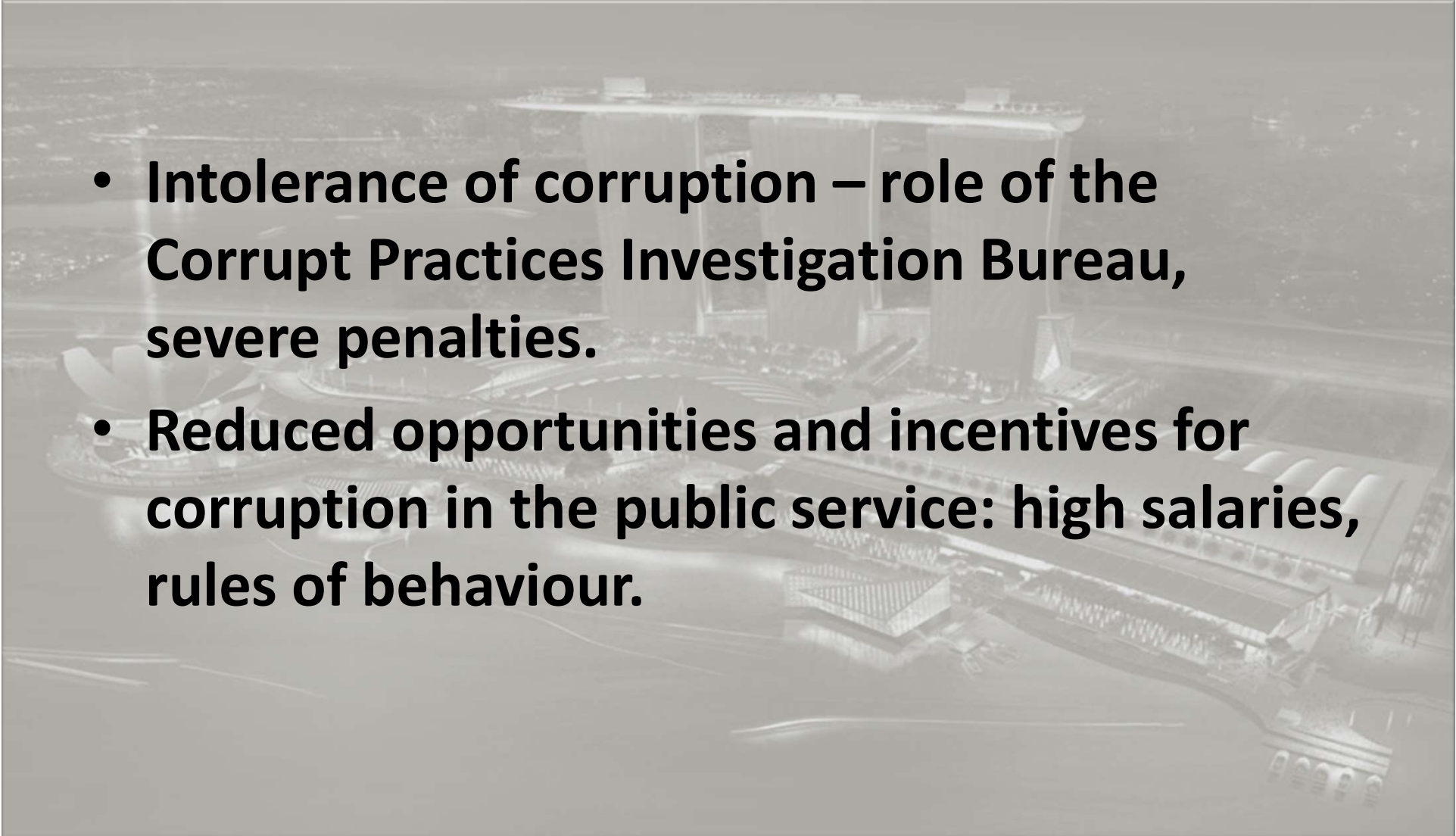
- Promoting inter-agency coordination for common objectives**

- 
- An aerial, grayscale photograph of a city skyline. The most prominent feature is a large, modern building with a distinctive, multi-tiered, cylindrical structure. The building is surrounded by other urban structures, including a large, curved, multi-story building in the foreground. The background shows a dense urban landscape with various buildings and infrastructure. The overall scene is presented in a semi-transparent, faded style, serving as a background for the text.
- E.g. 1: Industrialisation (EDB, JTC, DBS, technical education, urban planning, utilities, housing).**
 - E.g. 2: Transport (public transport, urban planning, congestion charging, COE scheme).**



Honesty

- Incorruptibility, Transparency and Fairness

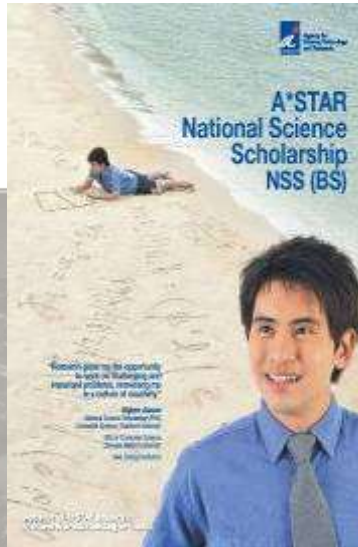
- Intolerance of corruption – role of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, severe penalties.
 - Reduced opportunities and incentives for corruption in the public service: high salaries, rules of behaviour.
- 
- An aerial, grayscale photograph of a modern city skyline. In the foreground, a large, curved building with a distinctive architectural design is visible. The background shows a dense urban landscape with various skyscrapers and buildings, extending to the horizon. The image is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be overlaid on it.

Development of Human Capital

- Fostering High Quality Public Servants

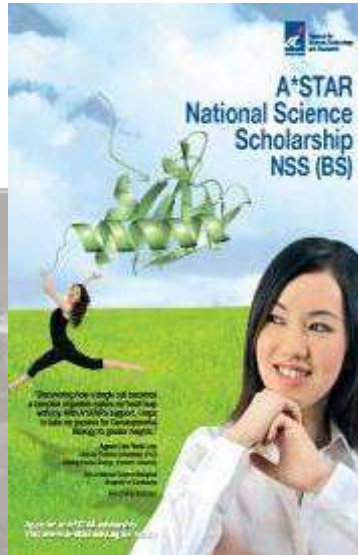
- **Recruitment and promotion based on meritocracy.**
 - **Extensive efforts to recruit and retain talent.**
 - **Consistent training and continuous learning.**
- 
- An aerial, grayscale photograph of a city skyline. The most prominent feature is a large, modern building with a distinctive architectural design, featuring a central tower and a wide, flat roof. The building is surrounded by other structures and greenery. The image is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be overlaid on it.

Human Capital



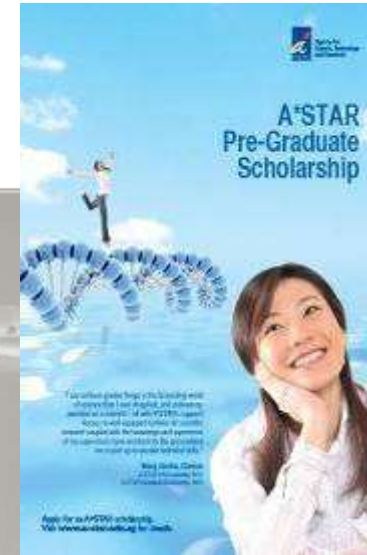
Stanford
Computer
Science,
PhD

Carnegie
Mellon
Computer
Science,
BSc



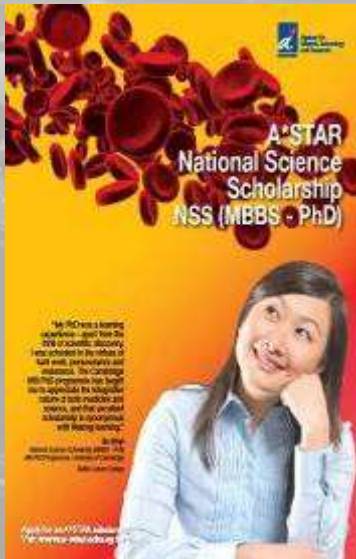
Stanford
Developmental
Biology
PhD

Cambridge
Natural Science
Biology
BSc

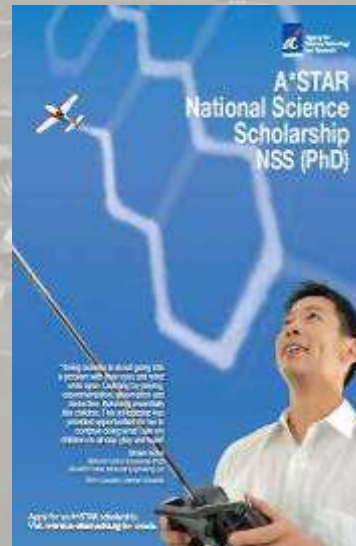


NUS
Biomedical
Sciences
PhD

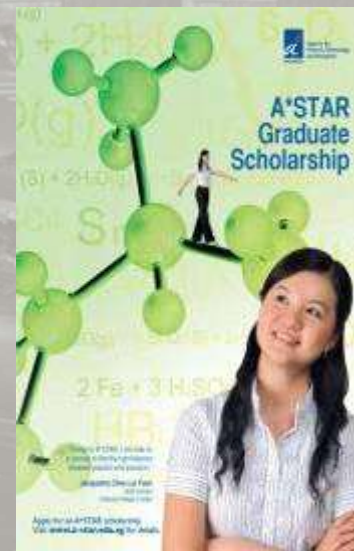
NTU
Biological
Sciences
BSc



Cambridge, London
Medicine/PhD



Stanford
Genetics
PhD



Imperial College London
Cancer Biology
PhD



Harvard
Stem cells
Post-Doc

Future Challenges for the Singapore Public Service

- Results of Globalisation and Development

- **Better educated and more politically engaged citizens.**
 - **A more economically divided society.**
 - **A more global society – more foreigners in Singapore, and more Singaporeans abroad.**
- 
- An aerial, grayscale photograph of Singapore's skyline, featuring prominent buildings like the Marina Bay Sands and the Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay. The image is semi-transparent, serving as a background for the text.

Photo: ST



Future Challenges for the Singapore Public Service

- Implications for Principles of Governance

- **Inequality: Is meritocracy still relevant? Should Singapore address its aversion to welfare?**
- **Complexity: Can the public service work better with the business and social sectors?**
- **Social cohesion: Can the public service be more transparent? Can it better manage relations between citizens and foreigners?**