

Graft complaints, cases at 30-year low

But CPIB flags areas of concern which include construction industry

By AMIR HUSSAIN

CORRUPTION within the construction industry was flagged as one area of concern by Singapore's graft busters.

But the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) also stressed that bribery cases here remain under control, with complaints and investigations at a 30-year-low.

The CPIB, which released its annual statistics yesterday, got 736 complaints last year, down 7 per cent from the 792 in 2013.

There were 136 cases which warranted investigation last year - a drop of 11 per cent from the 152 cases registered in 2013. Out of these 136 cases, 15 per cent involved public officers.

In terms of prosecutions, 168 people - 88 per cent of whom were from the private sector - were brought before the courts as a result of CPIB probes last year.

CPIB director Wong Hong Kuan told The Straits Times: "Singapore's low corruption level is a result of an unwavering political will and the populace's intolerance towards corruption. Nevertheless, low corruption does not mean no corruption so we should not let our guard down."

While CPIB did not provide a breakdown on prosecuted cases, there were enough cases of corruption in the construction industry to warrant concern.

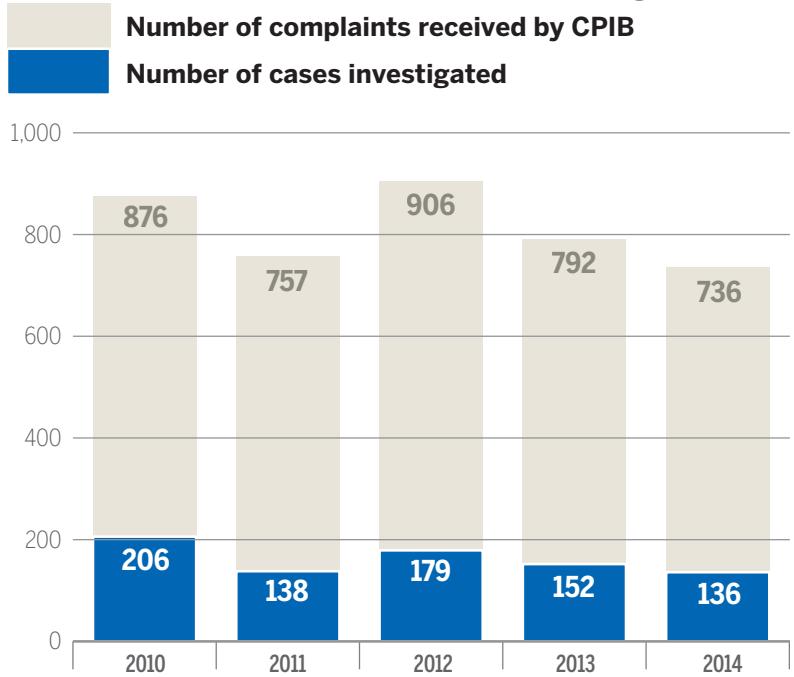
In one case, a project manager at Asia Development was found guilty of taking a bribe of \$3,000 from a director of Qi Yang Construction, in return for engaging the company for the supply of labour at two construction sites.

Two other areas highlighted involve the sale of household goods in departmental stores, and bribes for contracts cases in warehouse and logistics services.

In one case last year, a sales promoter with HC Shinco International was found guilty of conspiring with two colleagues to bribe three sales staff at Mustafa Centre to promote and sell their electronics products over other competitors'.

It is important that the corrup-

CPIB: Complaints and investigations



Source: CORRUPT PRACTICES INVESTIGATION BUREAU
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tion laws continue to be "rigorously enforced and corrupt behaviour continues to be socially unacceptable", said Mr Wong.

The Government is reviewing the Prevention of Corruption Act in a bid to beef it up. CPIB's current staff strength of around 175 will also be increased by more than a fifth as graft cases have become more complex. CPIB is also developing an anti-bribery package for private firms and businesses, with details to come later.

To encourage more people to come forward, CPIB is setting up a One-stop Corruption Reporting Centre, to be located in the city

area. Four in 10 complaints received last year came through mail and fax. But close to half of the complaints which resulted in investigations came through phone calls or face-to-face meetings. A complaint lodged in person was three times more likely to result in investigation than an e-mail or fax complaint.

The centre "will provide a more accessible and convenient platform for members of public who want to make corruption-related complaints or simply to know more about corruption," Mr Wong told The Straits Times.

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