S’pore keeps 5th spot in global study of least corrupt nations

STRICT anti-graft laws and strong economic growth contributed to Singapore maintaining its position as the world’s fifth least corrupt country, according to an international study.

In the Asia-Pacific region, Singapore ranked second behind New Zealand in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2006.

The index is an annual study of the level of corruption in the public sector in 163 countries.

Globally, Finland, Iceland and New Zealand tied for top spot with 9.6 points out of 10.

Denmark was fourth with 9.5, followed by Singapore with 9.4 points – the same score it had when it was also ranked fifth last year.

Mr Liao Ran, Transparency’s programme coordinator for East Asia and Greater China, said countries in the top tier had highly educated societies ingrained with a strong sense of integrity.

“In Singapore’s case, this has translated to an efficient legal framework, with qualified and professional enforcement agencies,” he said in a phone interview from Berlin.

Earlier this year, Singapore was ranked the world’s second-freest economy after Hong Kong in an annual study of economic freedom by American think-tank The Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal.

“We deserve a pat on the back for maintaining a relatively corruption-free environment,” said Singapore Management University law lecturer Eugene Tan.

“There is strong political commitment to stamping out corruption, aided by a fairly robust set of laws.”

He said enforcement agencies here should now move to educate students and the public on the role they have in stamping out graft.

“The index, released on Monday, also highlighted the divide between rich and poor nations in Asia.

Rising economies such as India and China registered moves up the rankings – both to joint 70th this year from 78th and 88th respectively last year.

This contrasted with nations like Cambodia (151st) and Myanmar (160th). Bottom of the list was Haiti with 1.8 points.