Singapore is 29th most peaceful country

Republic scores well in 140-nation index for its few refugees, lack of internal conflict

By Sue-Ann Chia

SINGAPORE moved up two spots in a global index which measures how peaceful countries are.

It ranks 29th out of 140 countries in the Global Peace Index, which aims to link peace to prosperity.

When ranked against its neighbours, Singapore is No. 6 among 25 countries in Asia and Australia.

Its improved position this year is due to its "favourable score" for the low number of refugees as a proportion of the population, said a statement on the index.

The index is compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit, which is part of the group that publishes the Economist magazine.

Overall, Singapore scored well in areas such as its lack of internal conflict, likelihood of demonstrations and political instability.

Last year, when the index was started, Singapore was ranked high for its low level of violent crime.

Commenting on the current results, political observer Eugene Tan said: "They show that the effort put in to maintain a cohesive society is paying dividends."

The index uses 24 indicators - grouped in three categories - such as levels of violence, military spending, relations with neighbours and political instability.

It also takes into account democracy, transparency, levels of education and material well-being.

Iceland, a newcomer on the index, clinched the top spot as the most peaceful country in the world. At the bottom, for the second year running, is Iraq.

Topping the list in Asia and Australasia is, once again, New Zealand, which ranks fourth globally. Next comes Japan (fifth globally), Hong Kong (23rd), Bhutan (26th), Australia (27th) and Singapore.

The study was initiated by Australian IT entrepreneur and philanthropist Steve Killelea, with an international team of academics, philanthropists and peace institutions.

Commenting on the findings, Mr Killelea, 58, said: "The world appears to be a marginally more peaceful place. This is encouraging, but it takes small steps by individual countries for the world to make greater strides on the road to peace."

Most countries had better scores for level of internal conflict and violent crime, political instability and potential for terrorist acts.

A report on the index noted that there is a strong relationship between peace, business and national wealth.

Said Nobel laureate and South African cleric Desmond Tutu: "You ultimately can't have business where you have conflict."

Singapore's Mr Tan added: "If you have to deal with security concerns, there would be increasing costs to doing business. So Singapore, in a sense, has peace dividends that attract businesses here."

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