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Corruption Singapore academia

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Dear Parliament of Singapore,

Corruption appears to be widespread in Singapore institutes of research and higher education, namely Nanyang Technological University, National University of Singapore, National Neuroscience Institute, and A*STAR. Evidence indicates systemic misconduct by scientific investigators in Singapore engaged in human and animal studies notably in the field of neuroscience. The implications for the production of knowledge in Singapore and due process regulating the same, as well as Singapore's aspiration to be an international hub of research and academia, are serious.

As Research Fellow at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), I was ordered by my then-Reporting Officer, Rupshi Mitra, to kill dozens of genetically modified animals for no reason, without anaesthesia, and in the context of a falsified official document defining the nature of the animal experiments. This illegal and inhumane act alone, in which I did not participate and which was executed by the Research Assistant, cost the people of Singapore no less than S\$ 25 000 – down the drain. I reported the incident through the prescribed channels and in utmost secrecy. To my surprise, the framework for investigating such incidents at NTU was ignored, my employment contract was terminated for a reason or reasons that cannot be understood, and NTU apparently spared no cost in attempts to bludgeon me into silence, including by harassing me at my place of residence, extortion, mischief, digital hacking, and other methods.

Curious at this disproportionate reaction, I investigated the background of the research I had been engaged in. Briefly, sixteen Principal Investigators including Rupshi Mitra took S\$ 20 million to research dementia and Alzheimer's disease and did not do research on dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Arguably, the outcome of this generous grant from Singapore to these Investigators produced either no demonstrable outcome or else produced meagre outcome of dubious validity.

Worryingly, analysis shows numerous irregularities in the work output of these Principal Investigators, including unethical or illegal conduct of human and animal studies, academic misconduct in the supervision and process of doctoral theses, misrepresentation or falsification of scientific data, and misreporting of critical administrative details related to the work such as professional affiliation, conflict of interest, repository record keeping, and funding.

The evidence is presented in accessible form on www.nanyangscandal.com and the full report is downloadable from the site. Subsequent investigations show that systemic misconduct in Singapore institutes of research and higher education is by no means limited to the activity of these sixteen Principal Investigators mentioned above. In the coming period, a report will be published detailing misconduct in the activity of a director of an institute in Singapore's top university; subsequent reports on other matters, such as clinical trials coordinated in Singapore, and individuals pending.

To the best of my understanding, Singapore's universities are 'autonomous institutes', suggesting that these institutes make decisions to produce knowledge without political interference. Needless to say, the aim of groups and Principal Investigators at these institutes such as mentioned above is apparently not the production of knowledge. Furthermore, it appears leadership at these institutes has assumed 'autonomy' to mean 'above the law and beyond accountability'. Such an assumption is not without merit given the obvious failure of not only internal checks and balances to regulate biomedical research and teaching, but also the failure of regulatory bodies with executive powers to impose Singapore law and policy on these processes, and to enforce corrective action on deviations.

One regulatory body immediately and saliently implicated in misconduct at these institutes is Animal & Veterinary Services, NParks (AVS). AVS staff are either absent from work or else party to corruption in research activity involving animals – there is no third possibility. Failures of other regulatory bodies with highly significant executive power, such as the Auditor General and against whom I lodged a police report, are not subtle.

The values of Singapore governance, integrity, service, and excellence, created an atmosphere potentially and particularly conducive to the challenging and high-risk venture inherent to scientific exploration and marketing thereof. Funding allocation has allowed the Singapore research career landscape to survive and indeed expand its physical resources where others elsewhere have met with otherwise terminal difficulties. It is therefore disappointing to report the opportunity cost of what appears to be a takeover of Singapore academic systems by a group or groups of individuals not honest in the endeavour assigned to them by the people of Singapore, and inexplicably endowed with unusual powers to usurp due process.

I am fortunate to have engaged in medical practice, research, and teaching in a number of nations. Of everywhere I lived and worked, the excellence of the Singaporean student shines above competition. The sheer number of creative, competent, hard-working, and resourceful students in Singapore is remarkable. Singaporean students are not only extremely well-prepared for an innovative, integrative, and entrepreneurial production of knowledge necessitated by the global outlook, they are also extremely motivated to embrace and spearhead this enterprise. In short and in my opinion backed by observation, the greatest resource for the production of knowledge in Singapore is Singaporean students.

My analysis presently published on www.nanyangscandal.com includes the entire work output of my then-Reporting Officer Rupshi Mitra as well as that of her husband, Ajai Vyas, and since both started working at NTU. Evidence shows that Mitra and Vyas attempted to destroy scientific output by students in Singapore because it highlighted flaws in previous work produced by Mitra and Vyas at NTU. In addition, Mitra and Vyas bullied these students into using hopelessly outdated and unscientific methods of investigation. In the process and with few exceptions, Mitra and Vyas probably destroyed the inspiration and ambition of these outstanding students. That some of these students nevertheless communicated their resistance to dishonesty and insisted on publishing valid data they managed to collect is testament to their competence and integrity.

The repression and retardation of Singaporean students and students coming to Singapore expecting the best, under cover of what appears to be the nefarious activity of Principal Investigators in Singapore universities, is painful to witness.

Clearly, more is at stake than individual and institutional reputations. I bring this matter to the attention of the Parliament of Singapore in the hope that genuine interests will be safeguarded: of proper use of Singapore public funding allocated to the production of knowledge, integrity of due process regulating research and academic activity, and the rightful place of Singapore and Singaporean students in the international science community and market.

Any and all evidence not presented in my report on www.nanyangscandal.com furnished upon request. I am at the disposal of anyone serving Singapore.

Respectfully Yours,

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