



# Takeaways

A newsletter by RICE



## What lies underneath.

Singapore's size has made plenty of us sceptical.

We are a small country. Our friends know other people, who know our colleagues or siblings, etc. Our dating pool can feel like treading familiar waters if you're active enough. And yet, Singapore has some secrets underneath.

Take, for instance, our story about Singaporean buskers this past week. It unearthed a simmering frustration that long existed within a small community. They perform amidst precarity and transience, and the walls are closing in on some of them.

A pattern of shady and unethical behaviour has actively caused buskers harm—and a secret passed around had revealed that it's by someone among them.

This pattern is powered by a highly-coordinated network of informants. To what end? Until now, we struggle to find a clear conclusion—not when the person responsible for all this continues to argue with readers whenever he's called out.

To move in the shadows takes skill. This week, we learned that from someone whose day job requires snooping around at night. He knows a lot of secrets, and he shares some of them with us.

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*P.S. We've also learnt some of you found your way here through your friends. If you haven't already, **subscribe** to our weekly newsletter today!*

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## Are You Watching Closely?



What started as a bizarre tip-off for our writer turned out to be a thorny and fascinating story about a small scene of Singaporean entertainers under attack by one of their own.

The life of a busker here is not easy. Take it from any of the several performers who—when not capturing the undivided attention of passersby—have had their livelihoods interrupted at frustratingly common intervals. And it all lies with one of their own.

**How One Magician Holds  
Singapore's Buskers Captive**

## **The PI with a Plan (and a Fedora)**



*“Going onto TikTok has been on my mind for a long time. No one really knows what private investigators do. I just wanted to show them that it’s like any other profession. We help people as well.”*

We take a sneak peek into the private investigator industry of Singapore through the eyes of their own.

**What a Private Investigator  
Does in the Shadows**

## **The Harsh Truths Post-377A Repeal**





Just under a year ago, the bill was passed to repeal 377A, a move that represented shifting attitudes towards Singapore's LGBTQ+ community. It was a win—a cathartic, symbolic victory after decades of long-held frustration.

But beyond that? God, it's rough. There's much more that needs to be done, and 2023 has shown that.

**In 2023, Not Being Homophobic  
Isn't Enough**

## 'Ong Lai' Lai Liao



This week, 'President Tharman Shanmugam' became a reality.

The popular former minister was sworn in on Thursday, marking a turning point in the conversation that, honestly, shouldn't have happened in the first place: something about whether Singapore is ready for a non-Chinese prime minister.

**Tharman's Presidency  
Should Be a Turning Point in the  
Non-Chinese PM Conversation**

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## Short Grains, or *piping-hot topics by the spoonful.*

- Shop theft is... apparently on the rise this year? (via *The Straits Times*)
- In case your old iPhone has self-immolated, or if you have money to burn yourself, the iPhone 15 launches tonight. Here's what you need to know about specs and prices. (via *HardwareZone*)

- Poptimism reaches the next big step: its own dedicated beat reporters. If you're a struggling writer obsessed with either Beyonce or Taylor Swift, you're in luck. (via CNA)
  - A new study shows how social media apps like Instagram and TikTok can be harmful for those suffering from eating disorders. (via The Age)
  - The vibe is off with this pair: Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu is set to meet Elon Musk to discuss further action against antisemitism on social media, including Musk's beloved X. (via The Guardian)
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We took to the streets last year to ask Singaporeans about their thoughts of the repeal—and what changes it might bring. One year later, how do these opinions hold up?

### What Does Repealing Section 377A Change?

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## We like to go out! We also hate our weather.

But as much as our team is full of contradictions, we simply can't go by our weekend without checking out some things. If you're still deciding on where to go, let us highlight some unmissable events for you:

1. Vroom vroom! F1 starts today. [Anyone else catching Post Malone?](#)
2. A retrospective showcasing the works of late Singaporean artist [Cheong Soo Pieng](#), a pioneer of the Nanyang art style, starts tomorrow.
3. A walk around Tampines will never be this entertaining: [Tampines Boy](#) uncovers the secrets and joys within its estates. This weekend marks the end of its run, so get to it.
4. Taking place on the other side of Singapore, the [Comics Art & Sci-Fi Expo](#) will commence at the Science Centre this weekend.
5. If you're a fan of ascending K-pop girl group NewJeans, you can't miss their pop-up collaboration with Line Friends. [Beginning this weekend at Orchard Central](#).

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