

Don't Spare the Rod



Reading

As he awaited flogging – the sentence handed down by a Singapore court after he pleaded guilty to vandalism – 18-year-old American Michael Fay could take little solace from the reaction in the United States.

Despite appeals and protests from human-rights groups, the Singapore High Court rejected Fay's appeal for leniency. His only hope now is an appeal for clemency to the President. Otherwise, he will be stripped naked, bound to wooden trestle, and given six lashes on his buttocks with a rattan rod. The resulting wounds usually take about two weeks to heal.

Singapore is committed to harsh penalties – even for first-time offenders like Fay, who has lived in Singapore since 1992 – in order to deter the kind of lawlessness it perceives as endemic in the United States. It has always based its survival on tight discipline. Singapore, which inherited its criminal code from British colonialists, cracks down hard against anything that smacks of a political challenge – including, in an early era, men with long hair. Its heavy fines – 1,000 Singapore dollars for such offenses as using chewing gum, spitting or feeding birds – are legendary. And holding a foreign passport has never been a guarantee of immunity. While Michael Fay faces the cane, a Dutchman and a young Hong Kong woman – who like Fay were only 18 years old when arrested – face the gallows for drug smuggling.

You can see the whole lesson from your teacher, please ask them to send it to you before the class.

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