

Survey finds corruption problem 'acute'
Malaysiakini.com
March 5, 2007
Soon Li Tsin

Problems relating to integrity and transparency in government agencies remain "acute and serious" - so says a report based on the first Malaysia Transparency Perception Survey.

Transparency International (TI) Malaysia, which commissioned the survey, released its report in Kuala Lumpur this morning. TI president Ramon Navaratnam (left) and Johor Bahru MP Shahrir Samad officiated at the event.

The survey, conducted by Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research, involved 1,025 respondents from members of the public and 411 from the corporate sector. Feedback was obtained through questionnaires and phone interviews between Nov 30 last year and Jan 12.

Clifford Herbert, vice-president of the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers, warned of the risks of allowing corruption to go unchecked.

"People will be discouraged from doing business here. Malaysia will become uncompetitive and will fall off investors' radar. We have to fight corruption seriously," he said.

Ramon agreed that graft posed an economic danger.

"You can get investors disenchanted with the country... you lose competition," he said.

3 most corrupt agencies

Asked to list the three least transparent government agencies, both sets of respondents cited the police force as the worst offender (see chart below).

The second choice varied - the public chose the road transport department/commercial vehicles licensing board, while corporate respondents picked political parties.

The two groups settled on the customs and excise department as their third choice.

Overall, the majority felt that levels of integrity and transparency in both the public and private sectors have not changed over the last 12 months.

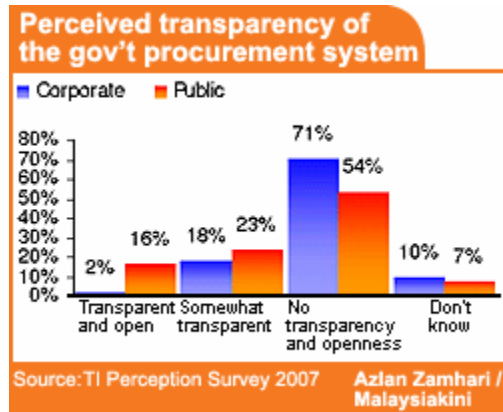
Still, 46 percent of the public were optimistic that public-sector integrity would increase in the next 12 months, compared to a paltry 26 percent of corporate sector respondents. Civil servants had the most faith in change, with the unemployed being the most pessimistic.

The survey also found that the incidence of bribery increases proportionately to income level - 52 percent of those earning RM5,000 and above admitted to having

paid a bribe or had a family member who had done so. In contrast, 18 percent of those earning less than RM1,500 confessed to bribery.

About 49 percent of the public said they had paid a bribe to avoid inconvenience, compared to 36 percent of corporate sector respondents.

Sectoral performance



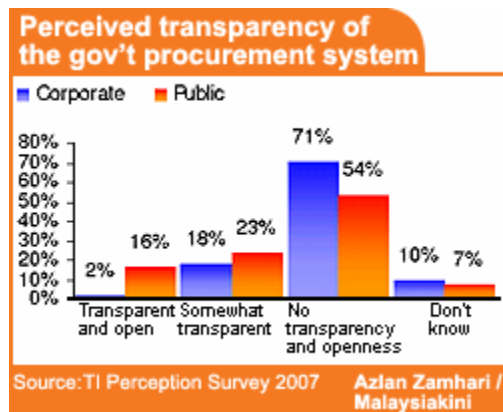
Financial services offered hope, scoring highest as the most transparent business sector.

At the other end of the scale was the building and construction sector, perceived to have the lowest levels of integrity and transparency.

A massive 71 percent of corporate respondents and 54 percent of the public described the government procurement process as lacking transparency.

As a result, 90 percent of the corporate respondents and 88 percent of the public agreed that companies which have failed to deliver on government projects should be blacklisted and prevented from submitting tenders for at least three years.

More than 70 percent of all respondents agreed that the Anti-Corruption Agency should report directly to Parliament.



They also gave the thumbs-up to enactment of whistleblower legislation and were of

the opinion that a jury system would improve transparency.

As to whether the goals of Vision 2020 can be achieved within the timeframe set, members of the public were more positive with 51 percent saying 'likely'.

However, 57 percent of corporate respondents indicated this is 'unlikely'.

