

Strange silence by gov't, judiciary
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Parliamentary Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang says the government was too embarrassed to highlight the country's unexpected high ranking in an international corruption perception survey.

The survey, carried out by Gallup International on behalf of Transparency International (TI), ranked Malaysia 9th out of 62 countries in a global survey on perceived judicial corruption.

The results, published in TI's 2007 Global Corruption report, surprised TI-Malaysia and the Bar Council.

Lim described the ranking as "so groundless and untrue that the judiciary and government are too embarrassed to come forward to claim credit."

"I had been baffled and mystified by news reports," he told a DAP public forum on civil service in Kuala Lumpur last night.

"If it is true that Malaysia is ranked as the ninth least corrupt nation ... then it is a fantastic feather in the cap ... and should be trumpeted all over the country and the world as Malaysians have the right to take pride at such an achievement."

"But mystery of mysteries, there had been total silence from the judiciary and the government on the claim ... when the government had never been shy in exploiting such good news to the hilt," he said.

Stony silence

He cited prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's testimonial in 2004 that Malaysia was a "good place to do business" after the country's competitiveness improved five places to 16th in the Swiss-based International Institute of Management Development's World Competitiveness Yearbook.

"However, when Malaysia's world competitiveness ranking plunged 12 places [the following year] ... it was met with a six-month stony silence by ministers and government leaders as if the report never existed," said Lim.

Currently, he said the government was behaving "so strangely as if they are more embarrassed than elated" by TI's survey results.

Lim said the most "baffling" aspect was that Malaysia ranked 9th in perceived judicial corruption in the world when it is ranked 44th in the 2006 TI Corruption Perception Index (CPI).

Malaysia's CPI has dropped seven places since Abdullah took over as premier in 2003.

Lim felt that two reasons for the survey results was that the survey was not meant as a ranking system and that respondents misinterpreted "judicial corruption."

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