

**Most Corrupted Country Label Based On Perceptions, Says Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak says the label given to Malaysia as the 'Most Corrupted Country' by the international media is based on perceptions and not empirical measurements.

"How is it that we have improved in competitive world rankings and yet we are also supposed to be as corrupt as certain parties claim us to be?," he asked.

In responding to such allegations in his blog NajibRazak.com, he claimed the said headlines were derived from surveys based on perceptions when most people would rely on more empirical measurements used by reliable independent groups.

He cited the example of the Transparency International Index which ranked Malaysia in 50th position out of 175 countries, improving 3 spots from the year before.

"If we are the most corrupted country, why are we nowhere near number 175?," he questioned again.

Recently, Transparency International reiterated that corruption in Malaysia was under control and the country's growing foreign investment was proof of it.

He pointed out that the 2015 Index of Economic Freedom had also ranked Malaysia as the 31st freest economy among 178 countries, with a score of 70.8 points.

It is an increase of 1.2 points since last year, with improvements in freedom from corruption, business freedom and trade freedom outweighing a decline in labour freedom and the management of government spending.

Najib said Bloomberg too has rated Malaysia as the 5th most promising emerging market in 2015 and the only ASEAN country in its 'top 10.'

And, the World Bank has further upgraded Malaysia from number 20 in 2014 to number 18 in 2015 in their 'Ease of Doing Business' Index.

In his blog, the Prime Minister agreed that issues raised by the Auditor-General's Report must be addressed and resolved.

"However, what is important here is we are making progress," he maintained, saying that there were 418 items highlighted in 2013 but in 2014, it came down to 319....hoping to reduce it much further in years to come.

Najib also said that he found it troubling that someone who used to continuously criticise the international media as being biased, "now suddenly believes and takes their arguments

as the truth."

"Remember this veteran leader once went on record to describe the western media as 'biased' in describing their administration. So, the western media criticising that administration is biased, but when they criticise my administration, they are not? There appears to be a double standard here," he added.

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