

Malaysia slips to 44th place on graft index

KUALA LUMPUR: Despite concerted efforts to check graft, Malaysia has fallen five places on the corruption ladder.

It now ranks 44th from the 39th position it occupied last year among 163 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2006.

It occupies the 10th spot among 25 economies in the Asia Pacific region, where the least corrupt are Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan in that order, with Myanmar as the worst. Malaysia, however, scores better than China, India, Indonesia,

Thailand and Pakistan.

Transparency International Malaysia president Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam, who announced this at a Press conference yesterday, said Malaysia obtained a score of five on a scale of 10, where 10 denotes "clean" and one denotes highly corrupt.

The CPI figure for Malaysia is a composite of corruption indicators from nine institutes and the statistics are compiled annually by Transparency International, a non-governmental organisation founded in Berlin in 1993.

The survey ranked Finland as the least corrupt nation among the 163 countries surveyed this year while Haiti stayed at the bottom of the list.

Navaratnam said the survey was widely used as a reference point by potential investors and as such the ranking had an effect on a country's economic and political interests.

He said efforts to fight corruption in the last three years included the establishment of the Malaysian Institute of Integrity, the Anti-Corruption Agency Academy and the

National Integrity Plan formulated in 2004.

"It is, therefore, disappointing that we have dropped from 39 to 44 in ranking."

ACA deputy director-general Datuk Zakaria Jaafar, who was at the Press conference, said the rise in the number of complaints about corruption was a good sign because it showed the public's confidence in the ACA.

The ACA investigated many cases, ranging from the big to the small, but these were not publicised, he added.