

Corruption ranking slips

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Local chapter of NGO disappointed

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia fell five ranks to 44th place on Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) from 39th place last year, according to reports announced in Berlin yesterday.

Although Malaysia fell five spots, the number of economies in the index has also increased by five from 158 to 163, said Malaysian Society for Transparency and Integrity (Transparency International local chapter) president Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam yesterday.

Malaysia fell to five points out of 10 compared with 5.1 points last year. Of 25 economies in the 2006 CPI Asia Pacific, Malaysia ranked 10th.

Finland ranked first in the CPI and Haiti the lowest.

"Malaysia's weakened ranking is disappointing despite initiatives taken by the Government to combat corruption," said Ramon.

"This could possibly be because the Malaysian Institute of Integrity (MII) and the National Integrity Plan were initiated in 2004 and were not considered in the report.

"There are weaknesses in the study methodology, such as some countries' results being based on three studies, and oth-

ers, like Malaysia, on nine.

"Despite weaknesses in the methods used, we have to admit that we have been on the decline in public perceptions.

"We are more convinced that the ACA must be independent."

Since the index was based on perceptions, MII deputy president Mustafar Ali said it was up to Malaysians to come up with a better index.

Anti-Corruption Agency deputy director-general Datuk Zakaria Jaffar said the agency was independent and could investigate politicians, but people were not willing to come forward with information.

Zakaria said the ACA had prepared the curriculum for schools and hoped that it would become a subject next year.

Staff were trained to do forensic accounting and were now profiling individuals and companies, he said.

"In the past, we used to win only about 50% of court cases but now 70%, and we are now targeting 80%," Zakaria said.

Before 2001, data available showed that 46 people were prosecuted compared with 71 cases this year alone, he said.

Just World president Dr Chandra Muzaffar said that to quell rumours about nepotism,

politicians and their families should declare their assets but Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi recently said that there was no need for one.

"That was disappointing. They should be able to demonstrate that they are above board," he said.

The annual CPI ranks countries in terms of degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians.

The 2006 CPI pointed a strong correlation between corruption and poverty, with concentration of impoverished states at the bottom of the ranking.

"Corruption traps millions in poverty," said Transparency International Chair Huguette Labelle in a statement.

"Despite a decade of progress in establishing anti-corruption laws and regulations, results indicate much remains to be done before we see meaningful improvements in the lives of the world's poorest citizens," she said.

Countries with significant improvement are Algeria, Czech Republic, India, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Mauritius, Paraguay, Slovenia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uruguay.