

Corruption on the rise in Zimbabwe, index shows

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Global anti-corruption group Transparency International says corruption is on the rise in Zimbabwe, ranking the country 130th out of 150 countries polled.

Transparency's corruption perception index (CPI), which is updated every year, ranks countries according to perceived levels of corruption as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys.

Zimbabwe was last year ranked 107th on the CPI, which some foreign investors are increasingly paying attention to before deciding where to place their investments.

According to the latest corruption survey, Zimbabwe, grappling with its worst-ever economic crisis, is placed in the same category with strife-torn countries such as Burundi and the Central African Republic.

Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Togo are also in the same bracket as Zimbabwe.

The best-ranked Southern African country on the CPI is Botswana at number 37, followed by South Africa at 51 and Namibia at 55.

President Robert Mugabe last year launched a crackdown on corruption that has seen a handful of senior officials of his ruling Zanu-PF party and government, such as former deputy finance minister Chris Kuruneri, facing prosecution.

But analysts say the anti-corruption drive has been selective and half-hearted, citing for example attempts by the government to sweep under the carpet a report by the National Economic Conduct Inspectorate detailing high-level corruption at state-run steel maker ZiscoSteel.

"If you look at the things that have developed such as the Zisco scandal and Zupco cases it shows that there is a lot of sleaze in the country, especially at the top level," said Harare-based economic analyst James Jowah, adding that the poor ranking on the corruption index would damage Zimbabwe's drive to woo foreign investors. -- ZimOnline

