

Media Release

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Sri Lanka is 92nd in the Corruption Index

Sri Lanka occupies the 92nd position among 180 countries in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2008 conducted by Transparency International (TI), the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption.

Sri Lanka's score remains at a low 3.2, indicating a serious corruption problem in the public sector. Neighbouring countries except Bhutan, all score below 3.5. Lack of transparency in political finance and poor parliamentary oversight are quoted as a key governance problem in Sri Lanka. Only India (3.4) and Sri Lanka are above a score of 3 with Maldives (2.8), Nepal (2.7), Pakistan (2.5) and Bangladesh (2.1) remaining with low scores. Analysts attribute India's position to the implementation of the Right to Information Act.

Explaining the significance of the CPI, Transparency International Sri Lanka's Executive Director J C Weliamuna said that the Index ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. It measures each country's level of corruption and places it on a scale from 0 to 10, where 10 stands for 'highly clean' and 0 stands for 'highly corrupt'.

The CPI focuses on corruption in the public sector and defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gain. In conducting the surveys used in compiling the Index, questions that relate to misuse of public power for private benefit are asked. These include bribery of public officials, kickbacks in public procurement and embezzlement of public funds. Questions that probe the strength of anti-corruption policies are also included. While the CPI 2008 has drawn on 13 different polls and surveys from 11 independent institutions, TI has strived to ensure that the sources used are of the highest quality and that the survey work is performed with complete integrity.

The 2008 Index indicates that irrespective of the countries being rich or poor, or being in the East or West, corruption prevails. Corruption is an issue which needs to be tackled separately with dedication. Among the poor countries, Barbados (7.0), Chile (6.9), Slovenia (6.7), and Estonia (6.6) have scored higher. They are known to take serious measures to beat corruption within their countries.

In the last slot in the Index are Somalia (1.0), Myanmar (1.3), Iraq (1.3), Haiti (1.4), Afghanistan (1.5) and Sudan (1.6). This is attributed to the internal and external conflicts and dictatorial regimes that existed in those countries and is quoted as an eye-opener to countries like Sri Lanka with the ongoing internal conflict. Topping the list for 2008 are New Zealand, Denmark and Sweden sharing the highest score of 9.3 followed immediately by Singapore (9.2), Finland 9.0 and Iceland (8.9).

"Stemming corruption requires strong oversight through parliaments, law enforcement, independent media and a vibrant civil society," says Huguette Labelle, Chair of Transparency International in a media release issued in Berlin. "While these institutions are weak, corruption spirals out of control with horrendous consequences for ordinary people and for justice and equality in societies more broadly," she added.