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Press Statement No. 45

Perceptions of corruption and incidences of bribery, one year after GE13 –

Transparency International-Malaysia Launches the 2014 Malaysian Corruption Barometer Results

Press Statement, 14th May 2014, Kuala Lumpur – Transparency International-Malaysia (TI-M) released the findings of the 2014 Malaysian Corruption Barometer (MCB), which surveyed the public's experiences and views on corruption and their willingness to combat the issue. The MCB also surveyed citizens' perceptions on the government's effectiveness in tackling corruption over the last 12 months.

Face to face interviews were conducted by Frost and Sullivan throughout Malaysia's 13 states using random sampling. In total, 2,032 respondents were interviewed covering 64% in urban areas and 36% in rural areas, and the gender distribution is 50% male and 50% female.

Findings:

The MCB findings are salient, particularly as we are one year on from Malaysia's historic 2013 general election (GE13). For the 2014 MCB, perceptions and experiences are not embedded in the heated context of an upcoming election, but, are instead rooted in a post-election climate, reflecting on Malaysia's state of affairs one year on.

Perceptions of Corruption

Positive results found by the MCB include: a decrease in the perceived levels of corruption in Malaysia compared to 2013, along with a decline in the the belief that corruption in the public sector in Malaysia is a problem. And, the perception that Malaysia's government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves also rated better this year compared to 2013.

With regard to the perceived levels of corruption, the MCB results found that 30% of the respondents felt corruption had increased over the last two years, 33% believed it had stayed the same and 36% said corruption had decreased a little. For the 2013 GCB survey, 39% of respondents felt corruption had increased.

Referring to the perception of corruption in the public sector, the MCB results show that 49% felt that corruption was an issue compared to 58% in 2013, and 24% believed corruption to not be a problem in 2014 compared to 6% reported by the GCB.

The MCB conveyed that 21% of those interviewed felt that Malaysia's government was largely run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, 38% said this was somewhat the case, and 33% believed this was happening to a limited extent. In 2013, 31% of the respondents felt that Government Officials largely looked after their own interests.

However, a year on from GE13 and the public's perceptions of the government's anti-corruption efforts has declined compared to the 2013 GCB findings. When asked how effective they felt the government's actions are in the fight against corruption, 38% of the respondents answered ineffective compared to 25% in 2013. The number of respondents

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who felt anti-corruption efforts were effective in Malaysia, lessened from 31% in 2013 to 28% in 2014.

The top six institutions perceived to be the most affected by corruption were almost identical to last year's results. However, political parties were perceived to be the most corrupt by 45% of the respondents, replacing the police at last year's top spot. The police still scored a close second, followed by public officials/civil servants, parliament/legislature, business/private sector and the judiciary.

Incidences of Bribery

The MCB findings show that the incidence of bribery in the past 12 months in Malaysia is higher compared to the GCB 2013 results. The top three institutions which the interviewees reported paying a bribe to over the last 12 months are the police, registry/permit services and land services. Of the respondents that had come into contact with the police, 11% had paid a bribe, 8% said they paid a bribe to the registry/permit services, and 5% to the land services.

What's more, the incidence of bribery in the education and medical/health services has increased (3% to 4% for education and 1% to 3% for medical services) along with the utilities services (increase from 2% to 5% in 2014). Across all institutions, the key reason for bribery is to 'speed things up'. Shockingly however, 22% of the respondents who had paid a bribe to an education institution said that was the only way to obtain a service, 20% gave the same reason for medical institutions and 30% for utilities services. These findings are a reality that cannot be ignored. Citizens' experiences show that access to basic services is being undermined by corruption and is even unobtainable for some unless they engage in bribery!

Citizen's Willingness to Report

The MCB results found that citizen's willingness to report corruption had declined. Of the interviewees, 51% said 'Yes' to report an incident of corruption, whereas 79% answered 'Yes' last year. For those respondents that were unwilling to report, 46% said this was due to being afraid of reprisals, 27% answered because they do not know where to report, and 27% felt it would not make a difference.

Yet, 73% of the respondents believe that ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption, which is still an encouraging quantity, despite this decreasing from 87% last year. As much as 54% said they were willing to sign a petition asking the government to do more to fight corruption.

Observations:

Two stark observations can be made from the MCB results: public perceptions on the government's effectiveness to fight corruption have declined, and incidences of bribery in public services have worsened, which is a deplorable reality.

The first series of the Auditor-General's (A-G) report 2013 raised some alarming weaknesses in the Ministries' implementation of programmes and activities. Administration errors, the substantial waste of public funds and taxes due to direct negotiations, and the severe mismanagement of funds for programmes such as the rehabilitation of malnourished children – all correlate with the MCB's findings. Standards of good governance and integrity are being compromised for state capture, at the cost of our future generation.

Recommendations:

1. **TI-M calls for integrity and trust to be made the founding principles of public institutions and services.**

2. **TI-M strongly urges for laws governing political parties to be reformed immediately, especially in political financing.**
With political parties being perceived as the institution/organisation worse affected by corruption, it is necessary for:

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- Full public disclosure of assets of elected and public officials;
- Political contributions should be channeled into proper party accounts and not in to personal bank accounts;
- Controlled and transparent political financing expenditure for both general election and party election campaigns;
- Federal government and all state governments to eliminate state capture;
- The elimination of the chain between politics and government procurement.

3. **TI-M not only urges the Heads of Department to confront such alarming weaknesses and mismanagement of funds, but for the Ministers responsible to be more accountable and immediately address reported misconduct and negligence.**

4. **Whilst systematic structures have been positioned to enhance anti-graft practices, the government has to implement tougher measures to curb corruption.**

5. **TI-M calls for more rigorous integrity testing in the selection of new recruits and current officers in the civil service.**
   - The most perceived corrupt institutions/organizations continue to consist of the same bodies. TI-M advocates for the government to take concrete action in addressing this. Integrity testing needs to be implemented, such as psychometric testing, as a method of pre-employment screening and carried out amongst current staff in the public services.

   - TI-M urges the government to announce what further concrete action they will be taking to curb the rising incidence of bribery, stipulate the allocated timeframe this will be conducted in and inform the public of the long-term measures they will be introducing to ensure these actions will be sustained. Citizens' lives and access to basic needs cannot continue to suffer at the hands of the greedy and as a result of ineffective management of staff.

6. **TI-M urges for the government to take more effective measures to address the prevalence of corruption in the police sector**.

7. **TI-M calls for the government to implement stronger policies and protection to reduce fear of reprisal for civilians reporting corruption.**

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Issued by:

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