

PM urges Thais to help beat corruption

RANKING IN GLOBAL POLL SHOWS COUNTRY HAS NOT PROGRESSED IN TACKLING GRAFT

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PRIME MINISTER General Prayut Chan-o-cha has pledged to improve Thailand's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) ranking while urging Thais to have zero-tolerance for graft.

In the latest 2016 CPI ranking published by Transparency International, the country is ranked in 101st position out of 176 countries worldwide, with a score of less than 50 per cent.

Speaking at yesterday's event to mark International Anti-Corruption Day at Bangkok's Impact Muang Thong Thani convention centre, Prayut said he has no tolerance for corruption and urged anyone who has information about those abusing his name to report directly to the PM's Office.

After presenting awards to state agencies with outstanding anti-corruption and transparency records, Prayut said people should join forces to get the country out of the vicious

corruption cycle by having zero tolerance on graft so that the country can do better on the CPI ranking of Transparency International.

Thailand was ranked in the same place as the Philippines, while Indonesia and some other Asean countries did better in 2016 in terms of corruption perception by the international community, which includes expert assessments and opinion surveys.

Regarding the government's role, Prayut said his administration has fully cooperated with the National Anti-Corruption Commission to fight graft along with non-government organisations, but the challenges are tough because corruption is deep-rooted in Thai society.

As a result, the government has been promoting new values to have no tolerance on graft, which includes the buying and selling of key government office positions, lack of transparency in state procurement and exploitation

of legal loopholes for financial and other benefits, among other methods.

Lt-General Sansern Kaewkamnerd, the chief government spokesman, said social media had circulated inaccurate information about Thailand's CPI ranking since the 2017 rankings have not yet been announced. Therefore, the country remains ranked at 101st of the 176 countries covered by Transparency International.

He said more efforts to combat corruption should lead to a better position in the 2017 rankings, which are due to be announced in January.

Meanwhile, the latest Bangkok Poll shows efforts to combat the corruption that remains rampant among state-agency officials have not been effective, largely because penalties are not severe enough, especially with regard to bidding collusion for state procurement contracts.

Creating awareness

The December 4-7 survey of 1,205 respondents shows that government officials are mostly perceived to lack transparency, followed by elected politicians.

Respondents also shared the opinion that court verdicts and the recent punishment of politicians and state officials involved in the previous government's rice-pledging scheme were severe and served as a lesson for others not repeat those corrupt practices which resulted in massive financial damage to taxpayers.

Prayut said the government has focussed on amending laws to increase effectiveness in combatting corruption while creating more public awareness of the negative consequences of graft on the public well-being.

He said the patronage system in Thailand is deep-seated so, as prime minister, he is very careful in dealing with people who may try to give him financial and other benefits in return for favours. As a result, Prayut said he never welcomes people who may try to do so at his residence.