



English Bahasa Indonesia Bahasa Malaysia ไทย বাংলা

Indonesia drops 14 spots on worldwide corruption rankings

Tria Dianti and Arie Firdaus

2023.01.31

Jakarta

Indonesia dropped sharply in worldwide corruption rankings released on Tuesday, as cases of kickbacks, judicial corruption and conflicts of interest have worsened in Southeast Asia's biggest country, watchdog group Transparency International said in its annual report.

Indonesia fell 14 spots to rank 110th on the group's 2022 Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which measures perceptions of public sector corruption.

Meanwhile, its score for perceived cleanliness in government and the public sector fell to 2014 levels – a drop that could affect investments in the project to build a new national capital on Borneo island, analysts said.

“Political corruption including bribery, gratuities and conflicts of interest between officials’ duties and business interests remain rampant, leading to the sharp drop in Indonesia’s position compared to the previous year,” said Transparency International Indonesia researcher Wawan Heru Suyatmiko.

The country’s score allocated by Transparency International fell to 34 out of 100 in 2022, down from 38 out of 100 the previous year.

“This is the worst since 2014, when the score was also 34. So we’re back to square one,” he said.

Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo came to power in 2014 on a pledge to clamp down on corruption.

According to Transparency International, a country’s score is the perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of



Protesters gather outside the local parliament building during a rally against the government's proposed plans to weaken the anti-corruption commission, in Surabaya, Indonesia, Sept. 26, 2019.

0-100, where zero means highly corrupt and 100 means very clean.

A country's rank is its position relative to the other countries on the index. Ranks can change merely if the number of countries included in the index changes.

In Southeast Asia, Singapore topped the Corruption Perception Index list, while Indonesia ranked sixth, lower than Malaysia, Timor Leste, Vietnam, and Thailand. Bangladesh ranked as the second most corrupt country in the South Asian

region, behind Afghanistan.

Pahala Nainggolan, the deputy for prevention at Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), said the Transparency International findings took him aback.

"I'm shocked. How come we scored only 34?" he said, warning that the perception could deter investors from coming to Indonesia.

Yusuf Hakim Gumilang, a member of the Presidential Staff Office, acknowledged likely shortcomings in the government's anti-corruption fight. He said the government had been implementing digitization at its agencies to reduce corruption.

"Maybe it's true that our corrective efforts are not enough," he told BenarNews.

As it is, in 2019, Indonesia's parliament had passed amendments that brought the once-independent KPK under the control of the executive branch.

The move provoked street protests, during which opponents accused the government of using the law to weaken the independence of the agency fighting corruption.

Then in December, Luhut Pandjaitan, the coordinating minister for investment and maritime affairs, said the KPK's practice of arresting officials while allegedly receiving bribes had tarnished Indonesia's image abroad, giving the impression that corruption was rampant in the country.

"It's not good for our country. It's very bad," said Luhut, Jokowi's most trusted minister.

"If you want to be squeaky clean, you might as well live in heaven," he said at the time.

'Back to square one'

The government stepping away from fighting corruption has backfired, according to Danang Widoyoko, secretary general of Transparency International Indonesia.

"The decline in the CPI score shows that this strategy is not working. Efforts to fight corruption in the political sphere and the judiciary have been stagnant," Danang said.

Bivitri Susanti, a lecturer at the Jentera Indonesia Law College and anti-corruption activist, concurred.

"President Jokowi had promised to strengthen the KPK, but now it's back to square one. This is proof that he has failed to fulfil his promises," Bivitri said.

A low corruption perception index score could get in the way of the government's efforts to attract investment to the new capital being built on Borneo, as quality investors will hesitate to enter countries with poor governance and high corruption

levels, she said.

“As a result, low quality investors will come. They will look for quick profits, make money as fast as possible, then bring it back to their countries of origin,” she said.

In August 2019, Jokowi announced that the country would move the capital from crowded and partially sinking Jakarta, on Java island, to East Kalimantan, a densely forested and thinly populated province in the Indonesian part of Borneo.

The government has struggled to attract investment for its construction since Japanese tech conglomerate Softbank last year withdrew its plans to invest.

University of Indonesia economist Faisal Basri said conflicts of interest had reached an emergency level because many top government officials have business interests.

“It’s no longer clear who are the government and who are business people,” Faisal said.

Since its inception in 1995, the Corruption Perceptions Index has become the leading global indicator of public sector corruption.

The index assesses 180 countries and territories worldwide on perceptions of public sector corruption, using data from the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, private risk and consulting firms and think-tanks. Scores reflect the views of experts and business people.