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# Cambodia still plagued by corruption: TI

[TI Cambodia executive director Preap Kol \(right\) at yesterday's event. KT/Chor Sokunthea](#)

Rampant corruption in the country's judiciary was one of the reasons why Cambodia remained perceived as the most corrupt nation in Southeast Asia, Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) said yesterday.

Cambodia scored 21 out of a possible 100 points on the CPI, coming in as the 156th perceived most corrupt nation of the 176 countries studied.

Transparency International Cambodia (TI Cambodia) executive director Preap Kol explained the judiciary is seen as one of the most corrupt public institutions in the kingdom, alluding to the public seeing it as an institution drenched in bias and favoritism.

"We need to clear out and speed up the judicial reforms. We want to see an independent judiciary which focuses on transparency of its trials, in the announcement of its rulings and decisions of its sentences as well as for the selection procedure of the judges to ensure that there is no political interference in the form of bribes," he said during yesterday's press conference in Phnom Penh.

When asked if the months-long detention of the four Adhoc activists and one National Election Commission official was the result of ongoing corruption in the Justice Ministry, Mr. Kol remained coy.

"Maybe. Possibly," he said on the sidelines of the event before excusing himself.

TI Cambodia chairman of the board of directors, Ok Serei Sopheak, also acknowledged the deep-seated perception of corruption many Cambodians had of the courts.

"Poor people will cry when they don't have money to pay the court officials so they go to the NGOs in the provinces. The perception of citizens and businesses is that if you have no money, you cannot win in court," Mr. Sopheak said.

TI Cambodia also recommended that the government keep a tighter leash on each ministry's expenditure as flagrant spending, especially towards the end of the financial term, often made it easy for misappropriation to go unnoticed.

"Also we still see a shortcoming in the management and monitoring of public expenditure. Most public ministries spend their money in the last term of each year so this makes it easy for mistakes in spending and public expenditure to occur and we have gaps, like in the management of natural resources for instance, like sand dredging," he said.

TI Cambodia also recommended that the government pass laws governing access to information and protection to whistleblowers as well as to amend several articles in the Anti-Corruption Law to include public asset declaration.

In Southeast Asia, Singapore again emerged at the top of the list, coming in seventh and scoring 84 on a scale of 100, earning it a "very clean" label. Myanmar, which ranked below Cambodia in 2014, edged ahead coming in at 136th, Laos at 123rd, Vietnam at 113th, Thailand and the Philippines sharing the 101st spot, Indonesia at 90th and Malaysia at 55th spot.

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