

Report: Lebanon Witnesses Improvement in Corruption Levels
Transparency International said Monday that Lebanon was among several countries that witnessed a considerable improvement in perceived levels of corruption.

"Countries with a significant improvement in perceived levels of corruption include: Algeria, Czech Republic, India, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Mauritius, Paraguay, Slovenia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uruguay," the global graft watchdog said.

Lebanon came 63rd and scored 3.6 in TI's annual Corruption Perceptions Index that covers 163 countries. Lebanon ranked 83rd and scored 3.1 in 2005.

The index score relates to perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people and country analysts and ranges between zero, which is highly corrupt, and 10, which is very clean.

Haiti, Myanmar and Iraq are perceived as the most corrupt countries in the world, while Finland is seen as the cleanest, TI said.

The organization noted that the index includes only those countries that feature in at least three surveys, meaning that many nations -- including some which could be among the most corrupt -- were missing from the list.

TI said that many countries' weak performance could be blamed in part on "facilitators of corruption" who help political elites launder or protect unjustly acquired wealth, including looted state assets.

"The presence of willing intermediaries -- who are often trained in or who operate from leading economies -- encourages corruption," TI said in the report.

"It means the corrupt know there will be a banker, accountant, lawyer or other specialist ready to help them generate, move or store their illicit income."

The organization called for a number of measures to fight such facilitation including the adoption of corruption-specific codes of conduct by professional associations, professional training to ensure honest intermediaries do not become unwitting accomplices and legal sanctions for professionals who enable corruption.

It also urged stronger scrutiny of the role of non-transparent financial centers in aiding graft.(Naharnet-AFP) (Photo courtesy of TI's website)