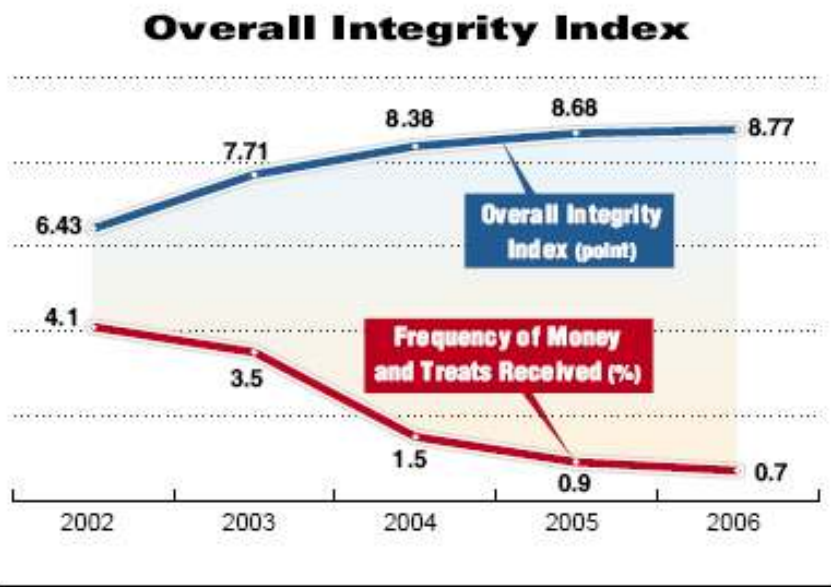


Transparency in Public Sector Improves: Survey 'Public Officials Still Vulnerable to Money, Gifts, Entertainment'

By Jung Sung-ki
Staff Reporter

South Korea's anti-corruption campaign is bearing fruits as its integrity index on the public sector has increased steadily since 2002, the Korea Independent Commission Against Corruption (KICAC) said Tuesday.

The anti-corruption watchdog's recent survey indicated that this year's average score of transparency among public agencies, including government ministries, local governments and public companies, stood at 8.77 out of 10 points, up 0.09 points from 2005.



The rate of bribery cases decreased by 0.2 points to 0.7 and the number of agencies whose employees were not involved in any provision of money or entertainment to work-related persons for benefits at all increased from 35 last year to 45 this year, the survey said.

A total of 97 surveyed agencies scored more than 9 points in the transparency index. The figure accounts for 32 percent of the total. In 2005, 62 agencies marked a score of more than 9 points.

Gallup Korea conducted the telephone survey of a total of 304 public agencies and companies and 89,941 people, including 4,522 public servants, between Aug. 28 and Nov. 3 to assess transparency in the public sector.

“The average integrity score of public agencies has not reached the 9.0-level that we aim to achieve, but the latest results are satisfactory in that the score has increased ever since we began the survey in 2002,” Jeong Gyeong-hoe in charge of the survey and evaluation of integrity index at the KICAC told The Korea Times.

The increase resulted from the government's strenuous anti-corruption campaign that has been pushed as a top government policy agenda since the inauguration of President Roh Moo-hyun in February 2003, Jeong said.

Last year, a non-binding social pact on anti-corruption measures, the "K-PACT," was signed by the president, government leaders, politicians, business representatives and leaders of civil society. The pact aims to encourage voluntary anti-corruption efforts from all walks of life to eradicate irregularities.

"We believe the improvement in the public sector's transparency campaign has served as a 'locomotive,' helping put South Korea's global corruption index on an upward trend," he said.

In the global Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for this year, Seoul placed 42nd out of 163 countries surveyed. The ranking marked a two-step fall from last year, but South Korea's transparency score increased by 0.1 of a point to 5.1, the highest mark since 1995 when the country scored 4.29, ranking 27th out of 41 countries.

The Berlin-based Transparency International (TI), a non-government organization committed to fighting corruption, issues the worldwide transparency index annually. CPI is a composite survey based on polls of resident and non-resident businesspeople and country analysts.

Despite the overall improvement, however, public officials are still vulnerable to the provision of money, gifts and entertainment to duty-related persons beyond the expense limit under the Code of Conduct, the survey said.

Public officials provided money or other articles to work-related people for benefits 3.26 times this year _ the average value of such amounted to 1.02 million won. In 2005, the frequency was 3.23 times valued at 920,000 won.

Under the code, officials are not allowed to accept a meal worth 30,000 won or more or drinks from a person whose business is related to his or her duties. The cap for congratulatory and condolence expenses given to a colleague is 50,000 won.

"More and more officials spend money in entertaining others related to their jobs even though our agency has strengthened the Code of Conduct," Jeong said. "It means public agencies just pretend to follow the directions of the code. Our agency will put the top priority on eradicating irregularities regarding such bribery-like cases next year."

By agencies, provincial education authorities had the lowest average score of 8.54 points with the highest bribery rate of 1.2 percent, while central government agencies got the highest score of 8.95 points.

The lowest index of education agencies is largely because of school's poor meal services for students and the bad management of sports clubs, the survey said.

Transparency in managing sports clubs in schools stood at 7.9 points with a 4.1 percent bribery rate. Management of school meal service had 7.52 points with 3.5 percent bribery rate.

The Mokpo City government in South Cholla Province and the Korea Coast Guard saw their transparency index most improving this year by 2.16 and 1.89 points, respectively, according to the survey. Mokpo marked 9.12 points and the maritime agency, 9.33 points.

The Korea Highway Corporation also saw improvement with 9.01 points, up 1.36 points.

Under a 12-point anti-corruption regulation of its own, Mokpo has implemented various anti-corruption programs. One of the programs is that if a city official violates the regulations, his or her co-workers share responsibility for the wrongdoing.

The city also adopted an evaluation system to check officials' job performances and transparent activities.

The Korea Coast Guard established a corruption reporting center of its own and has tried to give the public easy access to information from the maritime agency.

Integrity Index (2006)

Ministries and Commissions	Integrity	Recognition of Corruption	Information Disclosure
Civil Service Commission	9.14	9.67	8.12
Office for Government Policy Coordination	9.02	9.45	7.86
Ministry of Planning and Budget	8.71	9.40	7.34
Fair Trade Commission	8.82	9.31	7.24
National Youth Commission	8.56	9.17	6.51
Ministry of Finance and Economy	8.84	9.47	7.46
Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development	9.14	9.51	8.18
Ministry of Unification	9.01	9.62	7.98
Ministry of Justice	9.13	9.54	8.04
Ministry of National Defense	9.01	9.38	8.41

National Agencies	Integrity	Recognition of Corruption	Information Disclosure
National Tax Service	8.77	9.10	8.04
Korea Customs Service	9.03	9.43	8.70
Supply Administration	8.36	9.22	8.38
Public Prosecutor's Office	7.80	8.87	6.72
Military Manpower Administration	8.88	9.39	7.32
Defense Acquisition Program Administration	8.69	9.28	8.15
National Police Agency	8.35	8.86	7.16
Cultural Properties Administration	8.92	9.51	7.66
Rural Development Administration	9.18	9.50	8.57
Forest Government Information Agency	9.24	9.62	8.18
Small and Medium Business Administration	9.18	9.50	8.25
Korean Intellectual Property Office	8.71	9.09	7.44
Korea Food and Drug Administration	9.37	9.05	7.27
Korea Coast Guard	9.33	9.60	8.66

Cities and Provinces	Integrity	Recognition of Corruption	Information Disclosure
Seoul	8.29	9.02	7.79
Pusan	8.36	9.03	8.22
Taegu	8.42	9.08	8.17
Inchon	8.69	9.13	7.64
Kwangju	8.68	9.13	8.18
Taejon	8.99	9.32	8.06
Ulsan	8.82	9.17	7.96
Kyonggi Province	7.23	8.95	7.97
Kangwon Province	8.96	9.51	8.33
North Chungchong Province	8.47	9.27	8.35
South Chungchong Province	8.83	9.27	8.42
North Cholla Province	8.64	9.15	7.98
South Cholla Province	8.86	9.09	8.22
North Kyongsang Province	8.45	9.36	8.52
South Kyongsang Province	8.84	9.20	8.21
Cheju Island	8.82	9.35	8.37

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