

Weak Governance Blamed for Corruption Costs

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A noted legal expert has said that the hugely increased state budget allocation for the legal sector indicates the government's inability to clean up and strengthen its bureaucracy.

Frans Hendra Winata from the National Law Commission said that corruption has not yet been abolished because the systems to control and monitor it in government are too weak. He added that people are not afraid of getting caught in cases of corruption because they know that the punishment will not follow them through the remainder of their lives.

In neighboring countries such as Singapore, he said, people are afraid to get involved in corruption because

they know that they will be severely punished. He suggested that an ideal solution would be better promotion of good governance in all segments of the bureaucracy.

"The root of the problem is the weak control system applied by the government, especially in the financing, supervision and management of projects. The problem lies in the lack of discipline of civil servants — so many of them are corrupt. The system is there, but supervision is very weak," Frans said. "It matters a great deal now because the public discourse on the need to establish clean government has remained on paper. Why is it that Singapore can clean its bureaucracy and we can't?"

"Everything is in disarray because the authority of the law is not being



Legal expert Frans Hendra Winata says discipline is needed. Antara Photo

upheld, even though we know that social engineering should start from there," he said.

Frans made the comments on Saturday, in response to a recent remark by Finance Minister Agus Martowardojo that the government had prepared Rp 201.5 trillion (\$21.2 billion), \$361.68 million and 1.1 million euros — a total of almost \$22 billion — in standby funds in the event that it would have to pay fines in relation to the 20 ministries and non-ministerial state institutions now involved in legal battles against various domestic and foreign parties.

That allocation for 2013 also includes funding for the Corruption Eradication Commission and for financing activities of the ad hoc Corruption Court.

"Corruption steals too much from our hard-earned resources," Frans said.

He lamented the government often failing to win legal battles against foreign parties because of a lack of preparation and a shortage of local legal professionals who can fight for the country's interests in the international arena.

Former vice president and current chairman of the Indonesian Red Cross Jusuf Kalla said that "tolerating transgression of law would be dangerous" for the country's future.

"There is a fact that makes me feel unease today that is the emergence of the 'law of the jungle,' where people are taking law into their own hands and the government is not doing enough to stop it," Kalla said.