

## 'Accountability' crucial in graft fight

### Abhisit says business sector also to blame

Published: 18/10/2014 at 06:00 AM

Newspaper section: [News](#)

Civil society and private sector participation along with an effective witness protection programme are necessary in the fight against corruption, Democrat Party leader and former prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has told a conference.

Addressing the conference on fraud, asset recovery and cross-border cooperation organised by the International Chamber of Commerce in Bangkok yesterday, Mr Abhisit called for civil society and the private sector to get involved in the anti-corruption movement.

He insisted on Thailand's need for a "culture of accountability" with regard to information on law reforms he deems necessary and the establishment of an effective witness protection programme.

According to Mr Abhisit, up to 3% of the country's gross domestic product is lost every year as a result of fraudulent and corrupt practices in the country. Thailand's GDP is around 12 trillion baht.

"We are all victims of corruption and the loss of public funds should be everyone's concern. If everyone stands idly by, then it will be very difficult to curb corruption," he said.

He claims the business sector is also at fault.

"If companies feel like continuing to work with state actors using the same fraudulent tricks that they are used to, then our task is nearly impossible," Mr Abhisit said.

Only transparency can pave the way to a broader interest in keeping corruption at bay, he believes, and insists NGOs and watchdogs must continue to monitor decisions involving large financial sums.

"People must have access to critical pieces of information, but the whole system should also encourage them to come forward with their knowledge and ensure their safety," he said.

"We first have to establish mutual trust between all parties involved in the fight against corruption."

Pramon Suthiwong, chairman of the Anti-Corruption Organisation of Thailand, agrees that the protection of witnesses and whistleblowers is an important part of current legal reform proposals against corruption.

"We hope to ensure the safekeeping of sources and guard them from being discredited or any threats they might receive."

He also voiced support for Mr Abhisit's view about the participation of NGOs and watchdogs in trying to prevent corruption.

He gave the example of government efforts to regulate the expansion scheme for Suvarnabhumi airport.

The national committee regulating state enterprise, the so-called superboard headed by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, has appointed an external auditing team to follow the progress of negotiations.

"They are all stakeholders but have nothing to gain or lose in the expansion of the airport," Mr Pramon explained.

Thawat Damsa-ard, of the law firm Tilleke & Gibbins, remarked on how few attempts there are in recovering fraudulent assets.

"Especially in high-profile cases, all you hear about are people wanting to bring the wrongdoers to justice and prosecute them. They want corrupt politicians to go to jail.

"But there have been no known attempts to recover the money. Most of the time, no one even knows where it went," he said.

#### About the author

Writer: Ariane Kupferman-Sutthavong

#### Share or reprint this article:

[Delicious](#)   [Digg](#)   [Reddit](#)   [Stumbleupon](#)  
[Technorati](#)   [Twitter](#)   [Republishing permission](#)  
[Print this](#)   [E-mail this](#)

**Online content:** Breaking news | Top stories | News | Business | Opinion | Travel | Lifestyle | Learning | Tech | Property | Auto  
**Online services:** Thailand Guide | Local event calendar | Search | Hotel Booking | Online puzzle games | Horoscope | Forum | Classifieds | Online member  
**Bangkok Post Digital Convergence:** SMS Alert | E-paper | Print front page | Digital Archive | Newspaper Subscription | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [RSS](#)  
**Post Publishing Online Media Network:** Post Today | M2Fjob | M2Fnews | Elle Thailand | Elle Décor Thailand | Student Weekly  
 © 2014 The Post Publishing PCL: Terms of use | Republishing permission | Help | Sitemap | Online advertising | Classified advertising | Map | Contact Post | Tell us what you think | Partnership