

## The Roots of Corruption in Indonesia and Singapore: Building Real Anti-Corruption Solutions

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**Abstract** Corruption in Indonesia is a serious problem that continues to hamper national development, undermine public trust in government, and cause huge losses to society. Although various regulations have been implemented, corrupt practices remain rampant in various sectors. This paper discusses the main causes of corruption in Indonesia, including weak oversight systems, low transparency, lack of individual integrity, permissive legal culture, and weak law enforcement. One of the root causes identified is excessive interest in material wealth, weak internal and external legal culture, and lack of transparency in financial management and public policy. The case study of the PT Pertamina Patra Niaga scandal shows gaps in the supervisory system and the ineffectiveness of regulations in preventing corruption. In comparison, Singapore's success in curbing corruption is referenced, with an emphasis on the principle of zero tolerance, the use of modern technology, monitoring of officials' assets, and public participation. From this analysis, several solutions are recommended for Indonesia, including strengthening the independence of law enforcement agencies, applying advanced technology in surveillance, increasing transparency, and providing decent salaries for public officials to reduce incentives for corruption. In conclusion, eradicating corruption requires a holistic approach that includes reforming the legal system, increasing public awareness, and strict supervision in all strategic sectors.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Transparency, Law Enforcement, Surveillance System

### A. Introduction

Corruption is a complex problem that has long haunted Indonesia, causing losses to the state and society at large. In recent decades, Indonesia has faced a major challenge in eradicating corrupt practices that occur in almost every line of government and the private sector. These corrupt practices not only cost the country money that could otherwise be used for infrastructure development, education and public services, but also undermine the morality of the nation and discourage much-needed foreign investment for economic growth.<sup>1</sup> Corruption also creates social injustice and exacerbates the gap between the rich and the poor, which in turn can lead to social and political instability.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I Farida, "Dampak Korupsi Terhadap Investasi Asing Langsung Di Negara Berkembang," *Jurnal Ekonomi Pembangunan* 19, no. 1 (2021): 56–78.

<sup>2</sup> M Ravallion, "Corruption and Poverty," *The World Bank Economic Review* 32, no. 1 (2018): 1–22.

Despite efforts to tackle the problem, corruption remains systemic, with new cases often coming to light years after the fact. This phenomenon indicates deep problems in Indonesia's legal and governance systems. Slow law enforcement, weak internal controls and a lack of transparency in budget management are some of the factors that allow corrupt practices to continue.<sup>3</sup> In addition, a strong culture of patronage and nepotism also contributes to the proliferation of corrupt practices at various levels. In this context, the law should be the main instrument in eradicating corruption, with various regulations such as the Corruption Law that have been implemented to tackle the problem. The Corruption Law is a legal umbrella that regulates various types of corruption offences, ranging from bribery, extortion, embezzlement in office, to budget *mark-ups* and *kick-back* practices in the procurement of goods and services. The government has also established the Corruption Law. Anti-corruption institutions such as the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) have the mandate to investigate, prosecute, and bring to justice corruption cases involving state officials, state administrators, and other parties involved.

However, despite a clear legal foundation, its effectiveness is still in doubt, as corrupt practices are still rife, even at higher and more complex levels. One of the most recent examples is the corruption case involving PT Pertamina Patra Niaga, which is back in the public spotlight. This case involves allegations of huge state losses and involves important individuals within the state-owned company.<sup>4</sup> This incident raises a profound question: Who is protecting the corruptors who have caused huge damage to the state? With the various legal efforts that have been implemented, there are still many loopholes that allow the perpetrators to avoid punishment. These loopholes may include weaknesses in the internal monitoring system, a lack of coordination between law enforcement agencies, or even political intervention that hinders the law enforcement process.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to see how other countries have successfully suppressed corruption with a strict legal approach.<sup>6</sup> One example that can be used as a reference is Singapore, which is known for its success in combating corruption through strict and effective legal policies. Singapore applies the principle of *zero tolerance* to corruption and has a strong, independent and transparent legal system. In addition, Singapore also provides high salaries to state officials to reduce the temptation of corruption and

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<sup>3</sup> N Nurhasanah and T Hidayat, "Pengawasan Internal Dan Transparansi Anggaran Sebagai Pencegahan Korupsi," *Jurnal Akuntansi Pemerintah* 16, no. 3 (2019): 234-56.

<sup>4</sup> "Laporan Investigasi: Kasus Korupsi Di PT. Pertamina," *MajalahTempo*, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> R Anwar, "Intervensi Politik Dan Penegakan Hukum Korupsi Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Antikorupsi* 8, no. 2 (2022): 123-45.

<sup>6</sup> J. S. T. Quah, "Combating Corruption in Singapore: What Can Be Learned?," *Asian Journal of Public Affairs* 14, no. 1 (2021): 77-92.

implements a strict monitoring system of the assets and wealth of public officials.<sup>7</sup> Through comparative studies with countries that have more effective legal systems, Indonesia is expected to take lessons and improve its legal system to create an environment free from corrupt practices, in order to achieve overall public welfare. This study will identify key factors that determine the success of corruption eradication in other countries and analyse how these factors can be adapted and applied in Indonesia.

## **B. Method**

This research uses qualitative descriptive analysis methods and comparative analysis. The approaches used are normative and sociological juridical approaches. The normative juridical approach is used to analyse laws and regulations related to corruption eradication in Indonesia, such as Law Number 31 of 1999 concerning Corruption Eradication and its amendments. The sociological approach is used to understand the legal culture of Indonesian society and how social attitudes and values affect the implementation of the law in eradicating corruption. These two approaches form the basis of the research discussion, which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the legal system in Indonesia and compare it with the legal system of another country, namely Singapore.

Data collection techniques are carried out by documentation studies, which include literature studies and case studies. Literature studies are used to collect secondary data, consisting of primary legal materials such as laws and regulations, as well as secondary legal materials in the form of books, scientific journals, official reports, and relevant legal documents. Case studies were conducted on several major corruption cases in Indonesia, including a recent case involving PT Pertamina Patra Niaga, to provide a concrete picture of the challenges in law enforcement. Data analysis techniques were carried out qualitatively using descriptive and comparative approaches. The form of data presentation is organised descriptively-prescriptively in a structured scientific narrative to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue of corruption and efforts to eradicate it. With this research method, the research is expected to identify weaknesses in Indonesia's legal system and provide recommendations based on best practices from other countries.

## **C. Result & Discussion**

### **1. The causes of corruption continue to flourish in Indonesia despite various regulations that have been implemented.**

The word corruption comes from the Latin *corruptio* or *corruptus*. *Corruptio* has various meanings, namely the act of corrupting or destroying. *Corruptio* is also defined

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<sup>7</sup> R Klitgaard, "Controlling Corruption.," *University of California Press*. (California, 2018).

as rottenness, ugliness, depravity, dishonesty, bribability, immorality, deviation from purity, insulting or slanderous words or speech. Later, the word *corruptio* entered the English language as *corruption* and the Dutch language as *corruptie*, then the word *corruptive* entered the Indonesian treasury as *corruption*.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, according to Baharuddin Lopa, corruption is a criminal offence related to bribery, manipulation, and other unlawful acts that harm state finances or the economy, as well as the welfare and public interest.<sup>9</sup> Referring to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 31 of 1999 which has been revised into Law Number 20 of 2001 concerning the Eradication of Corruption, the definition of corruption is an act committed by public officials or individuals who intentionally enrich themselves, others, or corporations, which can harm state finances or the state economy. Overall, it can be understood as the abuse of power or authority for personal gain that hurts the state and society.

Corruption itself is still a serious problem that continues to overshadow many countries, including Indonesia. This practice has long occurred and infiltrated various aspects of people's lives. As a complex challenge, corruption not only hampers the pace of development but also undermines public trust in government and causes enormous losses to society. Although various efforts have been made by the government, international institutions and civil society groups to eradicate corruption, corruption cases are still rampant at various levels of government. Corrupt practices continue to evolve following social, economic and political dynamics, making eradication even more difficult. During this reality, corruption is often considered part of the system, which makes it even more difficult to eradicate.<sup>10</sup> One of the elements that drives a person to commit corruption is their excessive attraction to wealth and the material world. When a person has a strong desire to be rich but is unable to control this desire, they will look for quick ways to achieve it. If access to wealth can be obtained through corruption, then the temptation to commit such acts is even greater. The erroneous view of wealth as the only measure of success makes a person ignore moral and ethical values in achieving it. As a result, he no longer considers whether the means used are right or wrong, or if the goal is achieved. If this kind of perspective continues to develop in society without any efforts to improve, corrupt practices will become more widespread and difficult to eradicate. The

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<sup>8</sup> Nathanael Kenneth, "Maraknya Kasus Korupsi Di Indonesia Tahun Ke Tahun.," . . *JLEB: Journal of Law, Education and Business*, 2, no. 1 (2024).

<sup>9</sup> Faisal Santiago, "Penegakan Hukum Tindak Pidana Korupsi Oleh Penegak Hukum Untuk Terciptanya Ketertiban Hukum.," *Pagaruyuang Law Journal* 1, no. 1 (2017).

<sup>10</sup> Tridian Hariwangsa and Henny Yuningsih, "Upaya Penguatan Regulasi Untuk Mencegah Tindak Pidana Korupsi," . . *Disiplin: Majalah Civitas Akademika Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Hukum Sumpah Pemuda*, 2024.

more people misinterpret wealth, the higher the risk of them committing corruption to fulfil their ambitions.

In addition, weak legal culture is also an element that increases corruption. Legal culture, according to Lawrence M. Friedman, is the attitude of society towards law and the legal system. Legal culture includes the values, beliefs, thoughts and expectations of society. In the context of corruption, if people have low legal awareness and tend to be permissive towards acts of corruption, then efforts to eradicate corruption will face major challenges. For example, in an environment where bribes or gratuities are considered normal to speed up administrative processes, corrupt practices will continue without significant obstacles. Conversely, if the public has a high legal awareness and rejects all forms of irregularities, then social pressure on corrupt actors will increase, so that the legal system can function more effectively. Another influential factor is the active participation of the public in overseeing the course of government and public policy. When people dare to report corruption cases and support transparency, the opportunities for public officials to commit corruption will be smaller.

Friedman himself also analyses legal culture from various perspectives, distinguishing between internal and external legal culture that can affect the effectiveness of law enforcement in combating corruption. Internal legal culture refers to the attitudes and values adopted by law enforcement officials, such as judges, prosecutors and police. If law enforcement officials If the legal system has a corrupt legal culture, for example by accepting bribes or abusing authority, then the legal system will lose its credibility, and the public will increasingly lose confidence in legal institutions. Meanwhile, the external legal culture reflects people's understanding, attitudes and trust in the law. When people have a strong legal culture, they will be more courageous in reporting acts of corruption, demanding accountability from public officials, and participating in legal oversight. Conversely, if the external legal culture is weak, people tend to be apathetic or even supportive of corrupt practices because they feel they have no power to fight it. This imbalance between internal and external legal culture creates a gap for perpetrators of corruption to continue their practices without significant resistance.

To eradicate corruption, the Indonesian government has issued a regulation, namely Law No. 3 of 1971 concerning the Eradication of Corruption. This law states that corruption is an unlawful act committed to enrich oneself, others, or an organisation in a way that harms the state's finances or economy. This means that anyone who abuses their position or authority for personal gain and causes state losses can be categorised as a perpetrator of corruption. In addition, this regulation also emphasises that the perpetrator must be aware that their actions can harm the state, for example, by reducing the budget

that should be used for development or public services. Because of the enactment of this Law, Article 3e in Law No. 7/1955 was reinstated. This article is designed to be more flexible in the face of legal developments, so that it can adapt to changing times and prevent a legal vacuum in the fight against corruption. With this flexibility, the law can be more adaptive in dealing with various modes of corruption that continue to develop. Then, along with the times and to strengthen efforts to eradicate corruption, Law No. 3 of 1971 was finally replaced by Law No. 31 of 1999.<sup>11</sup>

The purpose of the establishment of Law No. 31 of 1999 is to eradicate corruption to realise a just and prosperous society based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. In addition to harming state finances, corruption also hinders the growth and continuity of national development, which requires high efficiency. Law No. 3 of 1971 itself is considered no longer relevant to the legal developments required by society, so it needs to be replaced with a new Corruption Eradication Law, which is expected to be more effective in preventing and eradicating corruption. More changes. A further amendment to Law No. 31/1999 occurred with the issuance of Law No. 20/2001, by expanding the definition of losses caused by corruption. In this change, loss not only refers to the state economy but also includes violations of the social and economic rights of the community at large.<sup>12</sup> However, despite the various regulations that have regulated the eradication of corruption, the fact is that the rate of corruption in Indonesia remains high. One of the main causes of rampant corruption in Indonesia is the weak oversight system, both from internal government agencies and from external sources, such as independent institutions and civil society. Internal oversight conducted by the Inspectorate General in various agencies is often only administrative and lacks depth in tracing the flow of funds and the efficiency of their use. In addition, many audits are conducted behind closed doors, preventing the public from participating in oversight or providing feedback on current policies. In terms of external oversight, institutions such as the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK) and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) face various challenges, including limited human resources and political pressure. As a result, many of their recommendations are not properly implemented by the government, so corruption continues to occur without significant preventive measures. On the other hand, public involvement in public oversight remains low due to the lack of access to information that

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<sup>11</sup> Trifena Julia Kambey, "Analisis Yuridis Mengenai Unsur Merugikan Perekonomian Negara Dalam Undang-Undang Tindak Pidana Korupsi.," *Lex Crimen* 9, no. 3 (2020).

<sup>12</sup> Trifena Julia Kambey.

allows them to effectively monitor government policies. This weak oversight system creates loopholes that further exacerbate corrupt practices in various sectors.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to weak oversight, the lack of transparency in government is also a factor that exacerbates corruption. Transparency is an important element in corruption prevention efforts. However, many Indonesian government agencies still apply a closed system in managing information related to budgets, development projects, and other public policies. This lack of transparency opens opportunities for collusion and nepotism in various sectors. One clear example of the lack of transparency can be seen in the procurement of goods and services. The non-transparent project auction system often gives certain parties an advantage through direct appointments that are not by procedures. Although the government has tried to improve transparency by implementing e-Government and e-Procurement systems in the management of state finances, there are still loopholes that allow for data manipulation and corruption. Misuse of the budget. In addition, many regions have not fully implemented this system, so manual practices that are more prone to corruption still dominate governance.

Furthermore, another factor that contributes to the increase in corruption is the lack of integrity and individuals. Many public officials and government employees could abuse their authority due to the lack of strict supervision. Low awareness of the importance of integrity in carrying out public duties leads to many individuals being tempted to commit corruption for personal or group gain. Some studies have also shown that the low welfare of civil servants can be a driver of corruption. Salaries that do not meet the needs of life often lead officials or employees to seek additional income through unauthorised means. In addition, a bureaucratic culture that has long been trapped in the practice of gratuities and bribes encourages individuals who are new to the system to tend to follow entrenched practices, so corruption continues to recur and is difficult to eradicate.

The final factor that contributes to corruption in Indonesia is weak law enforcement. One of the biggest challenges in eradicating corruption is the lack of firmness in sentencing the perpetrators. Many corruption cases end up with light sentences or even acquittals, thus not providing enough deterrent effect for other perpetrators. The judicial system, which is still vulnerable to political intervention and bribery at various levels of the law, further exacerbates the situation. In addition, legal proceedings against corruption cases often take a very long time, causing the public to lose confidence in the justice system. Many high-profile cases involving high-ranking

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<sup>13</sup> Della Juwita and Yoserizal Yoserizal, “). Faktor Penyebab Meningkatnya Angka Korupsi,” *Sanskara Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran*, 3, no. 1 (2025).

officials or political figures end up with lighter sentences than the state losses incurred. This shows that the legal system in Indonesia is still not strong enough to provide commensurate sanctions against perpetrators of corruption.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Effective ways to prevent and combat corruption in Indonesia's strategic sectors

Corruption in Indonesia often only comes to light after many years, causing huge losses to the state that are difficult to recover. This can be seen in the scandalous case at PT Pertamina Patra Niaga that surfaced in early 2025. The case involved alleged manipulation of the fuel oil (BBM) procurement process, graft practices, and other corruption that cost the state up to Rp 193.7 trillion. This offence involves the act of unlawfully enriching oneself or other parties, as stipulated in Article 2 and Article 3 of the Corruption Crime Law. In addition, this case reflects major loopholes in the procurement process and weak internal control functions as stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of SOEs Number PER-5/MBU/2021 on Risk Management and Gratification Control Programs in SOEs.<sup>15</sup>

However, the slow disclosure of corruption cases does not only occur in the SOE sector but also the government, political and even private sectors. This is due to several causes. First, corrupt practices often occur within complex networks of power and bureaucratic structures, making these crimes difficult to detect. Corruptors often take advantage of weak systems, legal loopholes, and limited forensic technology in detecting suspicious transactions.<sup>16</sup> Second, there is a reliance on manual reporting mechanisms and weak internal control systems, so potential violations often go unrecorded. Third, the involvement of political forces and power networks exacerbates the situation.<sup>17</sup> Corruptors with political access also often could protect themselves through their influence over oversight institutions or even the legal process. For example, strategic sectors such as energy are prone to corruption because they involve large funds managed by elite groups. As a result, investigations into major cases such as the PT Pertamina Patra Niaga scandal are often hampered by the influence of high-level power.

The rampant corruption in Indonesia cannot be separated from the systemic protection of corruptors. Furthermore, political power is often used to protect certain individuals or groups involved in corruption. Actors with political influence have

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<sup>14</sup> Della Juwita and Yoserizal Yoserizal.

<sup>15</sup> A Mulyadi, "Ada Apa Dengan Pertamina? Analisis Hukum Terhadap Kasus Korupsi PT. Pertamina Patra Niaga," *BHAKTI: Jurnal Antikorupsi* 1, no. 1 (2025): 37–48.

<sup>16</sup> S Samuji, "Aspek Hukum Pencucian Uang Dalam Bentuk Investasi Di Indonesia Berdasarkan Undang-Undang Nomor 8 Tahun 2010," *J-CEKI: Jurnal Cendekia Ilmiah* 3, no. 6 (2024): 8746–57.

<sup>17</sup> R. M. Khairunisa et al., "Penegakan Hukum Tindak Pidana Korupsi Di Indonesia Dari Perspektif Teori Lawrence," *Jurnal Ilmiah Nusantara* 2, no. 2 (2025).



extensive networks that allow them to influence the course of investigations or take advantage of loopholes in the legal system. In addition, political influence is also repeatedly used to slow down the legal process or even thwart investigations. Power networks become a key tool to hide traces of corruption.<sup>18</sup>

In many cases, corrupt practices also involve collusion between actors at various levels, from high-ranking officials to actors at the operational level. This collusion creates a "circle of protection" that makes it difficult to prevent corruption. Law enforcement officials are to reveal the truth. For example, in the case of the PT Pertamina Patra Niaga scandal, the alleged manipulation of fuel procurement allegedly involved several parties, from internal officials to external parties with close ties to the government elite. Another factor is weak law enforcement in Indonesia. Investigations into corruption cases are often hampered by a lack of resources, whether in the form of technology, experts or budget support. The low independence of law enforcement agencies means that investigations are often influenced by political pressure or conflicts of interest.

On the other hand, Singapore is one of the countries that has managed to significantly reduce corruption. This success is based on a firm and systematic approach. Singapore itself applies the principle of zero tolerance towards corruption, i.e. there is zero tolerance for anyone found to be involved in corruption, regardless of their position or social status.<sup>19</sup> As such, there is no preferential treatment that allows perpetrators to evade the law. Singapore's legal system is robust, independent and transparent. Every corruption case is thoroughly investigated, and the legal process is carried out with great speed and rigour. In addition, Singapore uses modern technology to monitor and detect potential corruption, such as financial forensic analysis and integrated reporting systems.

Singapore also adopts a preventive approach by providing high salaries to state officials.<sup>20</sup> This measure aims to reduce the temptation to commit corruption, as public officials are already properly incentivised to perform their duties. In addition, there is strict monitoring of officials' assets and wealth through a mandatory reporting mechanism that is audited regularly. This ensures that public officials have no opportunity to hide illegal wealth. Singapore's effectiveness is also supported by public engagement in the fight against corruption. Citizens have easy access to an anonymous

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<sup>18</sup> M. V., Darmawan and R Rahaditya, "Penerapan Delik Perbuatan Jahat Dalam Putusan Perkara Tindak Pidana Korupsi," *Ranah Research: Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 7, no. 2 (2025): 729-36.

<sup>19</sup> R. H Seno, "Kunci Kesuksesan Reformasi Birokrasi Singapura: Pembelajaran Untuk Para Pembuat Kebijakan," *Jurnal Litbang Provinsi Jawa Tengah* 20, no. 2 (2022): 163-77.

<sup>20</sup> N. Y Simbolon, "Politik Hukum Penanganan Korupsi Oleh Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi Pasca Disahkannya Undang-Undang No. 19 Tahun 2019," *Jurnal Mercatoria* 13, no. 2 (2020): 157-77.

reporting system that allows them to report potential violations without fear of threats or reprisals.

From Singapore's experience, Indonesia can draw some important lessons to improve its legal system and curb corruption. The first step is to strengthen the independence of law enforcement agencies. Indonesia's judicial system must be free from political intervention and able to handle corruption cases with objectivity and transparency. The application of the principle of zero tolerance towards corruption needs to be a top priority. Perpetrators of corruption, regardless of their social status or position, must be strictly punished to reduce corruption. Create a deterrent effect. In addition, the application of modern technology is urgent. Indonesia needs to develop a digital-based reporting system that can monitor and analyse suspicious transactions in real-time. Technology can also be used to improve internal controls in government agencies and the private sector.

Another important step is to strengthen the monitoring function of state officials' wealth. Every official should be required to report their assets periodically, with audits conducted by independent institutions to ensure the accuracy of the reports. Improving the welfare of public officials also needs to be a concern. Providing decent salaries can reduce the incentive to seek illegal benefits. In addition, reforms to the procurement system and budget management should be made to improve transparency and accountability. By adopting these measures, Indonesia can create a stronger and more effective legal system in the fight against corruption. Cases such as the PT Pertamina Patra Niaga scandal should serve as a momentum to carry out comprehensive reforms so that corrupt practices that harm the state no longer occur in the future.

## **D. Conclusion**

Corruption in Indonesia is a very complex problem that continues to grow despite various regulations that have been implemented. This practice not only harms state finances but also destroys public trust in government, hinders development, and creates social injustice. Corruption in Indonesia stems from various factors, including excessive attraction to wealth, weak legal culture, low individual integrity, weak oversight and transparency, and suboptimal law enforcement. All of these create loopholes for perpetrators of corruption to continue their practices. One of the main causes of the difficulty in eradicating corruption is the weak supervisory system, both internal and external. Internal oversight systems are often administrative without in-depth tracing of the flow of funds, while external oversight faces political challenges and limited resources. In addition, the lack of transparency in government management opens up opportunities for corruption, for example, in the procurement of goods and services that

are often not transparent. Law enforcement is also a major challenge, with light sentences and slow legal proceedings not providing a deterrent effect.

Experience from countries such as Singapore shows that a systematic approach with the principles of zero tolerance, transparency, independence of law enforcement, the use of modern technology, strict monitoring of official wealth, and providing decent salaries can significantly reduce the level of corruption. For this reason, Indonesia can learn from this success by strengthening the independence of law enforcement agencies, applying digital technology for surveillance, and increasing public legal awareness. Eradicating corruption in Indonesia requires comprehensive reforms in various sectors, including bureaucracy, politics, law, and society. With a decisive, transparent, and systematic approach, as well as active participation of the public, it is hoped that Indonesia can overcome this challenge and create a clean, transparent, and integrity government system for the realisation of a just and prosperous society.

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