

Gov't to regulate political funding soon
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In a surprise move, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today announced a new initiative will be introduced to regulate political financing for all political parties.

"This initiative will give emphasis that every contribution intended for any political party, either in the federal or state level, must be channeled through official accounts of the party.

"This is to avoid politicians from abusing the party's name to solicit or accept any contribution which is later misused for personal interest.

"Every contribution given must be issued receipts and banked into the party's account. With a proper record of contributions, it can be audited in the end of every year," he explained while officially opening the Certified Integrity Officer Programme at Putrajaya today.

The government, Najib elaborated, believes the initiative can prevent corruption and abuse at grassroots level, which will benefit the party and the public.

However, he did not provide details of the initiative, whether it will be in the form of a new law or administrative instruction, and when will it be implemented.

A scheduled press conference after the ceremony was also cancelled at the eleventh hour.

The initiative, which will be introduced under the Government Transformation Programme (GTP), is one of the proposals made by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Anti-Corruption Advisory Board, one of the five advisory panels formed to supervise the anti-graft body.

The Malaysian Chapter of Transparency International, an organisation advocating transparency and good governance, has also been lobbying the government to regulate political funding.

Earlier on, Deputy Finance Minister Awang Adek Hussin was found to be receiving cash contributions via his personal account, which he claimed were donations for his Umno division and social programmes in his constituency.

He argued that transferring the contributions - allegedly made by a Johor Umno division leader who is also a contractor of government projects - into the party account was "not encouraged".

The case was a reflection of the vague line between a political party's fund and a politician's personal interest in Malaysian politics.

During his speech, Najib stressed that the government views the issue seriously because without a specific, transparent and clear policy, it could opens space and opportunities for corruption.

This is a proactive step to strengthen the transparency and public trust towards the political organisations in this country, he added.