

'PM's initiative may scare off opposition donors'

MalaysiaKini.com

February 28, 2012

Kuek Ser Kuang Keng

The new initiative announced by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to regulate political funding may scare off people who want to donate to the opposition, said Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M).

Hence the administration should complement the new initiative with the introduction of government funding for political parties, to ensure a level playing field for both sides of the political divide.

"It has to be recognised that in our intense political competition, there are donors who may not want to disclose their names.

"The new initiative may cause people to be apprehensive because we are still not politically mature enough to accept funding for both parties," TI-M president Paul Low (right) told Malaysiakini yesterday.

Najib had announced yesterday that under the new initiative, every contribution for any political party must be channelled through official accounts of the party which will be audited annually.

Although Low, who has been lobbying for political funding regulation, welcomed the announcement, he contended that it must be followed up by state funding.

"It is better to have funding from the state based on a certain formula. It is not uncommon. It has been done in most countries such as South Korea. Many mature democracies have funding from the state to reduce the amount of money from businesses.

"I think it is very hard to preserve political integrity if politics is always mixed-up with business," he explained.

The idea of providing state fund for political campaign is part of TI-M's proposal submitted earlier to the government on the issue of political funding regulation.

To be more specific, Low said, government fund is to be given to potential nominated candidates for their campaigning to minimise their dependence on support from the business sector.

"If you get money from businesses, when you come in power, you will have to pay for it," he warned.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/190494>