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Ensuring funds are clean

Panel to formulate guidelines on political contributions

PUTRAJAYA: Political parties will have to be transparent on their sources of funding when the 14th general election takes place by 2018.

A national consultative committee has been set up to formulate guidelines on political funding, with the aim of ensuring that funds are sourced with integrity.

In announcing the plan, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak expressed hope the idea would be received by all, including the Opposition.

He also said the decision to set up the committee was not to quell concerns over the RM2.6bil political donation he had allegedly received, pointing out that he had proposed it six years ago.

"I have in fact mooted this idea since 2009 and it is on record," Najib said.

"I have mentioned this openly several times but it has never received support.

"We hope the idea will now be supported by all parties.

"If a transparent political funding system is something which they also champion, then the Opposition should work together with us to formulate the guidelines," he said at a press conference at his office yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the initiative was part of the Government Transformation Programme to establish a check and balance mechanism for political parties.

The national consultative committee on political funding has been given a year to come up with the guidelines on the matter and it



New set-up: Najib announcing the formation of a national consultative committee on political funding to be headed by Low (left) and Idris.

would be in place in time for the next general election, said Najib.

"The guidelines are necessary as there is no benchmark now to determine what is right or wrong when it comes to political funding.

"Existing regulations only concern spending during elections," he said.

The committee will be chaired by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paul Low while another minister, Datuk Seri Idris Jala is the deputy, with allocations being provided by the integrity and

governance division under the Prime Minister's Department.

Representatives from political parties, community leaders, academicians, thought leaders, civil societies and even youths will be made members of the committee and will consider all aspects of political funding regulations, including institutional changes, monitoring, enforcement and new laws.

The committee will also act as adviser to the Government on issues related to political funding.

When asked why the Opposition

was not earlier receptive of his idea to be transparent on financial sources for political activities, Najib said: "That you have to ask them. I don't want to second guess why they didn't want to accept the idea."

Asked if there would be a ceiling on the amount which a political party could accept, he said it should be left for the committee to decide what would be the best practice.

Low said the committee would have its first meeting soon and that he and Idris had already started the groundwork.