

PM: Crucial to introduce law on political funding

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PUTRAJAYA: A new law on political funding is the top priority among 115 initiatives under the newly launched National Anti-Corruption Plan 2019-2023 (NACP).

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad conceded that introducing new legislation on political funding would be challenging, but said it had to be done to combat corruption.

“Political funding is a big problem because political parties need funding. Without funding, they cannot function.

“The cost of being in politics is very high now and it is getting

higher all the time.

“So, the government wants to look at how political funding should not lead to bribes to parties or the government.

“It is very difficult, but we will find a way,” said Dr Mahathir at a press conference after the launch of the NACP here.

The plan states that a new act to govern political funding, which will treat lobbying as an offence, will be created within two years.

The Prime Minister’s Department will be the lead agency for the initiative.

Governance, Integrity and Anti-

Corruption Centre director-general Tan Sri Abu Kassim Mohamed said the centre was in the final stages of discussion before the Bill could be drafted.

“We are in the midst of discussions with all political parties, which I hope is in its last lap.

“We will consider all concerns expressed by the parties. I believe we will have a few more meetings before we can bring it to the Cabinet,” said Abu Kassim.

Under the political funding law, parties will be compelled to disclose all their sources of funding, including donations, or they will be liable

to punishment.

“The spirit behind this is transparency,” said Abu Kassim, adding that all political parties engaged had been positive about the proposed law, which will also prohibit foreign donations.

“Yes, this (prohibition of foreign donations) was discussed and we presented our opinion on it to the government,” said Abu Kassim.

On the matter of politicians serving in government-linked companies, he said only politicians with the right qualifications should be appointed.

“If these people have the creden-

tials or expertise that we cannot deny but coincidentally they are politicians too, they can be appointed.

“But we are aware that there may be a conflict of interest, so we take note of this and will look into reducing it,” said Abu Kassim.

On another matter, he said the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission was in its final stage of formulation.

“We are currently getting final input from the Attorney General’s Chambers on certain matters. If everything is positive, we will forward it to the AGC so that a Bill can be drafted,” he said.