

PM: Jet upgraded for meetings on board
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak broke his silence to defend the government's purchase and upgrade of a luxury jet for VIP use, by saying it is needed for official meetings mid-flight.

The purchase of the jet, which made its maiden flight yesterday, came under fire as it coincided with the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

"It is standard practice across the world for most leaders to use official jets, not for luxury, but for efficiency in carrying out their duties.

"The aircraft's interior is configured such that meetings and discussions can be held on board and that the work of state can continue even during the flight.

"Therefore the question does not arise as to whether or not a country should have an official jet," he said on his blog.

Najib's (photo) response was part of the 'frequently asked questions' (FAQ), which largely included issues raised by former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Although he does not mention Mahathir, the blog entry's address is <http://www.najibrazak.com/bm/tun-m-faq/>.

Mahathir is frequently referred to by Tun M.

Echoing a statement earlier issued on the matter by his office, he said the jet replaces a 16-year-old aircraft "that was becoming a safety hazard".

It is wrong to compromise the safety of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, who also uses the jet, he said.

Silent on Rosmah

Other issues raised by Mahathir (photo) addressed by the PM includes the murder of Mongolian woman Altantuya Shaariibuu, BN's survivability in the 14th general election and the crooked bridge between Johor and Singapore.

However, he was silent the ex-PM's attack on Najib's wife Rosmah Mansor's alleged lavish lifestyle and alleged domineering personality, and their daughter's grand wedding.

On the bridge, Najib said the cowardice is not behind the decision not to carry on with the project mooted by the Mahathir administration, but scrapped by the Abdullah Ahmad Badawi administration.

The Attorney-General's Chambers advised that modifying the pipes without Singapore consent within the Johor causeway will be a breach of the Johor-Singapore Water Agreement, he explained.

"There is no question of whether we have enough courage to go up against Singapore.

"The bridge was not built because Malaysia is committed to adhering to all agreements it has signed," he said.

He said Malaysia-Singapore ties is now very good and Malaysia is already mooting a "friendship bridge" which will not breach international law.

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