

Not proper to debate Dr M in public, says Najib
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For the first time since last Friday, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has specifically addressed his absence at a highly-anticipated 1MDB dialogue, lamenting that the event had morphed from a closed-door dialogue into an open debate.

Najib said it would not have been proper for him to publicly debate former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was present at the function dubbed 'Nothing to Hide' and appeared ready for a confrontation.

"The function changed format from a closed-door dialogue to an open debate. This would have caused an open political confrontation between Mahathir and myself.

"As prime minister, it is not proper for a debate like this to be held openly with the former prime minister who is also from the same political party," Najib added in a blog posting today.

Immediately after his eleventh hour no-show at the function, Najib issued a general statement that he was prepared for a dialogue but the atmosphere had to be calm.

However, he did not specially address the failed event in that statement.

Dr M has the right to ask questions

In the blog posting today, Najib said an open debate between Mahathir and him at the function would not bring any good to Umno and BN.

"As prime minister and Umno president, I am responsible to safeguard the good name of the government and party," he added.

Nonetheless, Najib said, Mahathir had the right to ask questions and he was still prepared to explain to the former prime minister.

Najib was supposed to speak at the function in a public relations exercise to counter negative publicity over his handling of 1Malaysia Development Bhd, which has accumulated RM42 billion in debt.

However, Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar advised Najib not to attend due to "security concerns".

This allowed Mahathir, who was only a guest at the function, to steal the show and deliver a scathing speech criticising Najib.

The public relations disaster was made worse when the police tried to stop Mahathir from

speaking, a scene captured by the media and had since gone viral on the internet.

Najib said he regretted the event's cancellation on grounds of security and that his intention to meet with the NGOs was foiled.

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