

**Najib defends mega-tower plan despite Dr M's call**  
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today defended a controversial plan to build a 100-storey mega-tower, after it sparked fierce opposition including from ex-premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Mahathir came out against the project yesterday, saying the RM5 billion Warisan Merdeka or 'Heritage of Independence' tower, to be built by 2020, would eclipse his brainchild, Kuala Lumpur's 88-storey Petronas Twin Towers.

Najib denied he was trying to dismantle Mahathir's legacy, saying the new skyscraper is a long-term project and is aimed at spurring economic activity.

"No, no, it's not a question of dismantling his (legacy). That's a totally frivolous statement," he told reporters after opening a one-day Asean finance ministers meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

"What Tun Mahathir has done is admirable, what we need to do is to build on his success and move on," said Najib, using Mahathir's honorific title.

azlanNajib said the ambitious project - to be driven by state-run asset management company, Permodalan Nasional Berhad - must meet conditions like being commercially viable as well as providing more business opportunities.

"The project must satisfy these conditions. If the conditions are met, it will go ahead," he said.

Mahathir, who remains an influential figure in national politics, despite having retired in 2003, has said he wants to see the Twin Towers remain the national icon of the country.

The Petronas Twin Towers were the world's tallest buildings when completed in 1998. They featured a year later in the climax of the Hollywood heist movie Entrapment starring Sean Connery and Catherine Zeta-Jones.

Apart from Mahathir, more than 263,000 people have also signed a Facebook petition against the new tower plan, saying that taxpayers' money would be better spent on education, healthcare and public transport.

Mahathir led a campaign to unseat Najib's predecessor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, whom Mahathir accused of scrapping his initiatives and dismantling his legacy built up over 22 years in power.

- AFP