

Najib defends Dr M over loan claims



Mahathir's day:
Dr Mahathir cutting his birthday cake yesterday. Looking on are Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali (left), Najib, Rosmah and the Science Adviser to the Prime Minister Prof Emeritus Datuk Dr Zakri Abdul Hamid.
-Bernama

It is all rubbish talk, says Prime Minister

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak defended his predecessor, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad from claims that the latter had written to the World Bank to request for loans.

"It is all rubbish talk," said Najib during a gala dinner held in honour of Dr Mahathir at the Putra World Trade Centre here last night.

In his blog yesterday, Dr Mahathir also said that at no time did he personally write a letter or verbally make a request for loans from the World Bank.

He added that Malaysia had been borrowing project loans from the World Bank since 1958.

He said the last set of negotiations for the loans had been conducted in 1997 for projects involving the education, social and technical sectors.

"The currency crisis also began in 1997. Naturally, the loans were not approved until 1999 when the crisis was over," said Dr Mahathir.

It was reported that PKR had reproduced World Bank records that revealed that Dr Mahathir's administration had accepted financial aid many times between May 18, 1982 and

March 30, 1999.

At the dinner which celebrated Dr Mahathir's legacy and his 86th birthday, Najib said the best way to remember Dr Mahathir's contribution to the country was to make his dream of Vision 2020 a reality.

"He gave Malaysia the self-belief we needed to achieve success.

"Hence, we have the slogan "Malaysia Boleh!" (Malaysia Can-do!) and this is our inspiration," Najib said.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said his most treasured legacy as Prime Minister was the absence of racial riots.

He said this was his best legacy despite being viewed as a "Malay extremist".

"I'm glad I made it to my 86th birthday. I hope I can answer your prayers for a longer life," he said.

He later launched the Mahathir Distinguished Internship Programme, which enables individuals to examine his achievements in building the material successes enjoyed by Malaysians today.

The programme is opened to postgraduates, academicians and professionals below 35.

Interns under the programme will be based at the Perdana Leadership Foundation. — Bernama