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'Debate will spark a battle'

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PM: Public confrontation will not be good or appropriate

PETALING JAYA: The Prime Minister says no good will come out of a public debate on 1MDB between Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and him.

Instead, it would only spark an open political confrontation between the two.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said he had accepted an invite to a closed-door dialogue session which, among others, would have allowed him to explain that RM42bil of 1MDB's funds had not gone missing as alleged.

The format of the event last Friday was then changed from a closed-door dialogue to an open event, which the Prime Minister said was not suitable.

"A change such as this would have caused the event to spark an open political confrontation between Tun Mahathir and myself.

"As Prime Minister, I feel it is not appropriate for this debate to be held openly in public involving a former Prime Minister who also comes from the same political

party," Najib said in a posting on his blog yesterday.

Najib said that such a debate would not bring any good to Umno and Barisan Nasional, which he leads.

"As the Prime Minister and Umno president, I am responsible to maintain the good name of the Government and party," he said.

He said Dr Mahathir had the right to ask questions, which he was willing to clarify.

"This I am willing to do so that appropriate matters which Tun

Mahathir brings up can be explained."

Najib said he regretted the dialogue had to be cancelled due to security concerns, as it meant that he could not have a session with the invited non-Governmental groups.

However, Najib said he would continue to provide information in a suitable and appropriate manner.

This would include accepting invitations from NGOs, some of which Najib said he planned to meet with in the future.