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Najib: **Improper** for me to debate with Dr M

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> Such open encounter will not benefit Umno and Barisan Nasional, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak (pix) yesterday said as the prime minister, it would have been improper for him to openly debate with former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also from the same political party.

He said such a debate would not benefit Umno and Barisan Nasional.

"As prime minister and Umno president, I am responsible for safeguarding the government and party's good name.

"Tun (Dr Mahathir) has the right to ask and I am prepared to give an explanation to him.

"This I can do to ensure all issues raised by him are answered," he said in his blog posting.

However, Najib said he regretted that the Nothing2Hide dialogue had to be called off due to security reasons and he was unable to hold discussions with the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which had invited him.

He said on May 19 he received the invitation to attend the dialogue organised by Sukaguam and JASA.

"I agreed to attend the dialogue which was on current issues.

"The dialogue was aimed at explaining how RM42 billion from iMalaysia Development Berhad (iMDB) did not just disappear as alleged by Mahathir.

"The Finance Ministry and iMDB had formulated a rationalisation plan to reduce the company's debts," he added.

Recently, he said iMDB had succeeded in repaying RM3.6 billion towards this effort.

"I was saddened when these efforts went unappreciated by those who criticised iMDB's debts," he said.

He said the Nothing2Hide dialogue had transformed from a closed-door dialogue session into an open debate and this could have sparked off a political confrontation between Mahathir and him.

"I regret that the event was cancelled.

"However, I will continue meeting NGOs in the near future," he added.