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Dr M ^{The Star}
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PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak has hit back at former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for echoing malicious Opposition rumours about an alleged RM24mil ring purportedly purchased by his wife.

"It is a lie, and the company had clarified that such a ring was never bought by Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor. It is regrettable that someone of his stature should pass on such slander to the people," Najib said in a post on www.najibrazak.com.

Najib said Dr Mahathir's criticisms were "unfair or misleading" and refuted his claims about the replacement Government jet.

"He echoed the Opposition in raising the replacement Government jet, claiming that the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong does not use the jet, calling me a liar. But again this is false, His Majesty was in fact the first VIP passenger to use the new aircraft for a trip to Langkawi, and will continue to do so," he said.

"It is wrong for Dr Mahathir and any party member to undermine the party leadership just because their personal wishes are not met," he said, adding that he had insisted on support for the leadership during Dr Mahathir's 22 years in power.

"We did our part then, and I supported him through thick and thin. I did so because I believed then, as I do now, that party unity is a prerequisite for what we want to achieve for the country," said Najib.

"I have the people's mandate and I am answerable to the party and the people, not to one individual. At the next general election and party election, the party and the rakyat can exercise their democratic rights through the ballot box," he said.

He also rebutted Dr Mahathir's statements about the challenges faced by the Government's investment arm 1Malaysia Development Berhad, saying the claim that he was responsible for a loss of RM42bil as a "deliberate twisting of the facts".