

**Public Debate With Dr Mahathir Will Not Benefit Umno, BN, Says Najib
Bernama
June 10, 2015**

KUALA LUMPUR, June 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said a public debate between him and former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was not appropriate because it would not bring any benefit to UMNO and the Barisan Nasional (BN) as both of them were from UMNO.

Najib, who is also UMNO president and BN chairman, said he had a duty to protect the good name of the government and party.

"Tun (Dr) Mahathir has every right to ask (questions) and I am willing to explain to him. This I am willing to do so that reasonable questions asked by Tun (Dr) Mahathir can be clarified," he said in his latest posting on his blog NajibRazak.com Wednesday.

In it, Najib also clarified about the cancellation of a dialogue he was to have with several non-governmental organisations at the Putra World Trade Centre here on June 5.

Najib said he received an invitation to attend the closed-door dialogue organised by Sukagum (an NGO) and the Special Affairs Department (JASA) on May 19.

"I appreciated their invitation and agreed to attend the dialogue named 'Dialog PM bersama NGO' which was to be about current issues. Among others it was to explain that RM42 billion belonging to 1Malaysia Development Berhad had not gone missing as claimed by Tun Dr Mahathir.

"In this matter, I am pleased to inform that the Finance Ministry and 1MDB have come up with a rationalisation plan to reduce the company's debts.

"Recently, 1MDB succeeded in paying back RM3.6 billion towards achieving this objective. However, it is regretted that this effort was not welcomed by those making criticisms on 1MDB's debts," he said.

However, said Najib, the format of the dialogue event turned from a closed session to one of an open debate.

He said changes of this nature could have resulted in the event stirring up open political confrontation between Tun Dr Mahathir and him.

The prime minister added that he was saddened that the event had to be cancelled on security grounds and that his intention to have the dialogue with the NGOs did not materialise.

However, Najib said he would continue to update the people in whatever way he could in a good manner, including accepting invitations from NGOs and holding meetings with groups

of NGOs in future.

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