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Parliament-Protest

OPPOSITION MP'S STAGE WALKOUT BUT RETURN TO TAKE OATH

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 20 (Bernama) -- Claiming that the first meeting of the new parliament today is unconstitutional, opposition members staged a walkout but returned later to take their oaths of office.

The MPs from PAS, DAP, Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) and Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) mostly walked out of the Dewan Rakyat at 10.55am.

Keadilan president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and PBS president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan, however, only left the house at 11am when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Barisan Nasional (BN) chief, was about to be sworn-in.

Of the MPs who walked out, 25 were from PAS, 10 from DAP, five from Keadilan and three from PBS. Two PAS MPs -- Abdul Hadi Awang and Mustafa Ali -- were not present this morning.

The opposition MPs returned to the Dewan Rakyat at 12.15pm to take their oaths of office.

Opposition Leader Datuk Fadzil Noor told reporters that the opposition legislators walked out to protest against today's meeting which according to them was unconstitutional.

He said the notice calling for the meeting was issued by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Dec 13 without the advice of the cabinet which was only formed on Dec 14.

Fadzil said the opposition MPs, however, decided to go ahead and take their oaths of office so that they could participate in debate sessions in the house.

"We will take the oath of office, but in protest," he said before the MPs returned to the house. "The swearing-in is necessary to enable us to discharge the responsibility entrusted upon us by the people."

Asked why Dr Wan Azizah left the house later than the other opposition MPs, Fadzil said: "You'll have to ask her...but as far as I know, she opposed (today's meeting) just like the other opposition members."

Met by reporters, Dr Wan Azizah confirmed that she viewed today's meeting as unconstitutional.

"True democracy must be based on laws. It is improper for the BN to act according to their whims and fancies just because they have a two-thirds majority in parliament," she said.

Pairin said he too supported the walkout staged by the opposition MPs in protest of today's meeting.

--BERNAMA

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