

# **Mahathir quashes rumours Kedah MB quitting**

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ALOR STAR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday denied speculation that Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain would be stepping down soon.

Dr Mahathir, who was here to attend the Sultan of Kedah's 73rd investiture ceremony at Istana Anak Bukit, said "there was no truth in the speculation."

To a question whether he was satisfied with the performance of Syed Razak, Dr Mahathir said: "I am not dissatisfied."

"I must say he has done a good job. I think he is all right," he added, just minutes before leaving for Kuala Lumpur.

Speculation had been rife in Chinese newspapers about Syed Razak's position as menteri besar, especially after Barisan Nasional's defeat in the Lunas by-election recently.

The story of the impending resignation was further fuelled when Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Dr Abdul Hamid Othman resigned from the Cabinet.

It had been speculated that Dr Hamid would take over from Syed Razak as menteri besar.

Dr Hamid lost in the general election to PAS' Datuk Shah-

non Ahmad in the Sik parliamentary constituency, but was made a senator to facilitate his position as a Minister.

A Bahasa Malaysia daily reported that Syed Razak was called by Dr Mahathir two days ago about his position.

Syed Razak, however, denied the article, saying that he went to Kuala Lumpur for a meeting with Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainudin.

On the proposed Malay unity talks, Dr Mahathir admitted that there might be differences of opinion but stressed that the discussion must go on.

"The important thing is that we have agreed to sit down and talk to each other," he said.

He said he had received a letter from PAS acknowledging his first letter and that "it was waiting for the next move from Umno."

Dr Mahathir said the climate for the first Malay unity talks, which had never been held over the last 10 years, was good and he expected something to come out of the meeting.

In an immediate response, PAS president Datuk Fadzil Noor said he welcomed Dr Mahathir's stand that whatever differences, "both parties must sit down first".

"That is why PAS is going ahead with the talks although there are some in the party who think that it is an Umno trap," he added.