

Dr Mahathir accepts Nik Aziz's apology over Quran remark

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PETALING JAYA, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today accepted Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat's apology for falsely alleging that he did not know how to recite the Quran.

"Yes, I forgive him ... not only that, I pardon him," he said at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang

upon his return from the Fourth Asia-Europe meeting in Copenhagen.

On the Pas spiritual leader and Kelantan Menteri Besar's contention that Dr Mahathir did not know Arabic, the Prime Minister quipped: "He is also not that fluent in Arabic ... but Urdu, he is capable."

Nik Aziz had explained that what he wanted to say was that Dr Mahathir did not know Arabic.

"It was a slip of the tongue. I thought of something else but something else came out of my mouth," he said on Wednesday.

Elaborating the next day, he said drowsiness had caused the slip of the tongue. He had taken a nap after dinner and was still drowsy after being awoken to give the ceramah at which he made the comment.

Nik Aziz has stated his willingness

to issue a public apology to Dr Mahathir but has not yet tendered one.

The Kelantan Menteri Besar is also embroiled in another controversy in which he likened God to a thug.

Various quarters have called on him to retract his "samseng" statement but Nik Aziz is adamant that he has not committed any wrong. Reports lodged against him on the matter are under police investigation.

On the candidate for the Gaya by-election, Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, said the candidate would be announced before nomination day on Thursday.

The seat fell vacant when SAPP president Datuk Yong Teck Lee, who was MP for Gaya, was disqualified after he was found guilty of corrupt practices during the campaign for the Likas State seat in March 1999.