

Dewan Rakyat speaker should be a man of honour

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COMMENT I feel sad at reading what Dewan Rakyat speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia said regarding two DAP members of Parliament, as reported by the Barisan Nasional Backbencher's Club on Saturday.

Pandikar is said to have challenged both Segambut MP Lim Lip Eng and Tanjung MP Ng Wei Aik to resign as the people's representatives, if he (Pandikar) could prove that parliamentary reforms are introduced in the early part of 2016.

In the first place, as the honourable speaker of the august House, Pandikar should respect that these are two elected representatives.

They are not in Parliament by chance. They represent two important parliamentary constituencies, and as members of the opposition, they are just as important as any lawmakers to parliamentary democracy in the country.

By urging them to resign as parliamentarians, Pandikar shows disrespect to the people who voted for these two DAP elected representatives. Who is Pandikar to ask both Lim and Ng to resign, when they are, in fact, elected by the people?

It is different when someone is a lawmaker and is appointed or holds an important portfolio or office which requires them to fulfil certain functions, but for a lawmaker, there is no office to resign from.

In wanting to be respected, Pandikar should show himself to be a man of honour.

Seven years or more

During the controversy over the makeshift toilet, it was Pandikar himself who claimed that it was hard to introduce any form of parliamentary reforms that he had set out to achieve.

The rakyat, watching from the sidelines, had expressed the same concerns. We expected the speaker to be independent and making fair decisions instead of receiving instructions from anyone or siding with the ruling party. Most of us supported Pandikar who wanted to see reforms, yet over seven years that Pandikar has been in Parliament as its speaker, there has been no reform.

When things were finally looking up and he reiterated that he would continue as the Dewan speaker, people expected some forms of reform to be introduced immediately. But it is still forthcoming.

Like Lim and Ng, most of us were also disappointed when the speaker himself ruled the

Public Accounts Committee could not meet to investigate the 1MDB scandal.

When DAP lawmaker Tony Pua wanted to debate with 1MDB's president Arul Kanda Kandasamy, we were all looking forward to it, although we were half expecting that it would never take place. It was therefore a real big let-down to the people when the speaker himself intervened, whatever the reasons Pandikar gave.

When the opposition wanted to table a motion of no-confidence against Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, initially there was also some form of resistance from the speaker himself. Despite this being an important topic, the matter was not treated with urgency.

When Kuantan MP Fuziah Salleh raised the concerns on behalf of Kuantan residents over the bauxite mining project in Pahang, Pandikar, too, gave an "irrational answer" in throwing out the petition. In the first place, had the Pahang state government listened to the people, there would not have been the need for Fuziah to raise it in Parliament. This is what Pandikar failed to understand.

Therefore, it is not surprising that frustrated MPs like Ng and Lim had raised their concerns about parliamentary reforms that Pandikar had earlier promised.

Even rakyat are disappointed

It is not only Lim and Ng, but many of us who have been watching the Parliament in session feel that Pandikar has failed to carry out his responsibility as speaker in some ways.

For him to use Standing Order 35 to shut out both the DAP lawmakers is simply an insult to the people who voted these two people as their representatives in Parliament. He will be watched from now on, for his own conduct.

I hope that Pandikar will retract his statement and honour the mantle placed upon these two elected people's representatives.