

**All elected House speakers are from Sabah, S'wak
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Sabah politician Pandikar Amin Mulia was today sworn in as the Dewan Rakyat speaker.
MCPX

pandikar aminWhile Pandikar Amin (photo) was the only name proposed for House speaker, there was a contest for the two deputy speakers.

Santubong MP Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar from Sarawak and Beluran MP Ronald Kiandee from Sabah - both from the ruling Barisan Nasional - ran against opposition candidate DAP's Kepong MP Tan Seng Giaw.

Wan Junaidi, who obtained 157 votes, and Kiandee, who got 140 votes, were later declared winners and sworn in as deputy speakers.

As expected, Tan lost in the race. He managed to get only 81 votes - all from the Pakatan Rakyat opposition. There are 140 BN MPs and 82 Pakatan members in the House.

parliament 2008 numbers and percentage of seatsWan Junaidi and Kiandee were proposed by the prime minister while DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang, who is also Ipoh Timur MP, nominated DAP deputy chairperson Tan.

Today was the first session of the 12th Parliament after the March 8 general election.

The appointment of Pandikar Amin was followed by the swearing-in of all 222 members of parliament led by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, followed by Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and cabinet ministers.

Few interesting moments

During the otherwise uneventful swearing-in ceremony - which lasted close to three hours - there were only a few interesting moments:

Early on, Karpal Singh (DAP-Bukit Gelugor) queried on the failure of deputy health minister Abdul Latif Ahmad (BN-Mersing) to raise his hand while taking his oath of office.

Pandikar, however, let off Abdul Latif, saying: "Who knows why he did not raise his hand. Maybe he was in pain?"

Later on during the swearing-in of opposition MPs, Abdul Ghapur bin Salleh (BN-Kalabakan) pointed out that Ibrahim Ali (PAS-Pasir Mas) was not wearing either the Baju Melayu or the lounge suit as required by the dress code.

Ibrahim was wearing what looked like a light-brown jacket and different coloured pants.

Pandikar said this could be due to the fact that Ibrahim - who ran under the PAS flag but is widely known to an independent - did not have a party whip to remind him of the dress code in Parliament.

"He contested under PAS, but it was only a loan. Maybe the party whip did not instruct him to wear a lounge suit," said Pandikar, to laughter from MPs.

Seven-term MP Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong), meanwhile, elicited a lot of "oohs" and "aahs" when he recited his oath of office from memory without reading from the prepared text.

King to open session tomorrow

Pandikar Amin, former Minister in the Prime Minister's Department and a veteran Sabah politician, served as a senator before and was president of the now defunct Parti Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar Bersatu). He did not contest in the recently held general election.

His appointment, under Article 57 of the Federal Constitution, was proposed by Abdullah and was seconded by Najib, who is also Dewan Rakyat chief whip.

The Dewan Rakyat will be in session for 16 days until May 27.

parliament 2008 first day 280408 12The sitting was adjourned to tomorrow after the deputy speakers' election. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin, will open the Parliament session tomorrow.

The 12th general election on March 8 saw BN securing a simple majority to form the government, winning 140 of the 222 parliamentary seats, while the opposition won 82 - with PKR winning 31, DAP (28) and PAS (23).

For the first time, the first 30 minutes of the question-and-answer session will be telecast live by RTM from Wednesday.

This is the first time the Dewan Rakyat will be helmed by a speaker and two deputies from Sabah and Sarawak, largely seen as a sweetener granted by Abdullah for the states' BN partners for performing well in the general election.

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