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Dr M: Pandikar embarrassed me

CHAGRINED: He claims Pandikar had said he wanted to step down as speaker

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TAN Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia's denial of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's claim that he intended to resign as Dewan Rakyat speaker has drawn the chagrin of the statesman.

Dr Mahathir yesterday insisted that Pandikar expressed his intention to step down during a recent meeting, and said he had felt "embarrassed" over the latter's apparent "backtracking".

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad says Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia said he was not happy with how Parliament was treating him

"He embarrassed me by saying (publicly) that he would not resign when he had (earlier) come to meet me — when I did not demand for a meeting — to express his dissatisfaction with (Prime Minister) Datuk Seri Najib Razak and saying he wanted to do so.

"Why would he do this? He said he was not happy with the way Parliament was treating him as the speaker.

"As a speaker, he has to meet a lot of VIPs. His room is not very comfortable, maybe that was why he wanted to resign. Furnishing was not given."

Dr Mahathir said this after launching a book entitled *Dr Mahathir's Selected Letters to World Leaders Volume 2* at the Perdana Foundation in J-resint 8 here yesterday.

He also claimed that during the meeting, Pandikar had said he was no longer effectively the speaker.

"He told me of his feelings on the way he was treated in Parliament and asked me (to advise on) what he needed to do.

"So, I said if he wanted to resign, then he should do so. I also believed him when he said a letter was given to Najib to convey the resignation.

"I am merely repeating what he

(Pandikar) said but now he said I am lying, which is not good, and has put me to shame."

In denying his resignation, Pandikar was yesterday reported as debunking the "rumour", saying Dr Mahathir's statement should not be blown out of proportion.

Pandikar had admitted to meeting Dr Mahathir recently, "but only to talk about current political issues".

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir, in a question-and-answer session, suggested that Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng resign together with Najib, claiming that the antagonism between the federal and state governments had affected the country.

He claimed that Lim's administration had led to racism and antagonism between the two governments.

"For 60 years, we had peace and stability in this country. Now, when we have different governments in different states, we have this antagonism. And you fall back on

racial sentiments and things like that. And, of course, this is not doing the country very good."

Asked who would be the best-suited candidate to become prime minister, Dr Mahathir said: "There is no one".

He also believed that the prime minister had "too much power" and that there should be a separate cabinet, comprising people not appointed by the prime minister, as a form of check and balance.

"We give too much power. When the prime minister abuses his power, we cannot say anything."

However, Dr Mahathir noted that there was -a case to be made for enabling some leaders to serve for a long time, for the sake of continuity.

"Nobody can change or develop the country overnight. During my time, I was lucky I did not have so many problems on a regional context.

"That is why given the amount of problems, the prime minister must be happy to resign."