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Speaker denies quit move

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Pandikar refutes Dr Mahathir's allegation on resignation

IPOH: Hours after former Prime Minister Turi Dr Mahathir Mohamad claimed that the Speaker of Dewan Rakyat has quit, Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia himself issued a statement refuting he has resigned.

"I have not quit my position as Speaker of Dewan Rakyat, contrary to whatever others have said," he said in a statement issued late last night.

Pandikar said he would be assuming his regular duties at the coming second term of Parliament which runs from Monday until June 18.

He said he would also conduct the swearing-in of two new members of the house - Rompin MP Datuk Hasan Arifin and Permatang Pauh MP Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

He would also be chairing the presentation of proposals for the 11th Malaysian Plan, as per Rule 27(3) of the Dewan Rakyat Standing Orders.

Dr Mahathir made the claim during a forum titled "Bicara Negara" at a hotel here yesterday. He said Pandikar's duties would be taken over by his deputy.

"He (Pandikar Amin) came to meet me, and told me that he does not want to hold on, and therefore the Speaker will now be

his deputy," he said at a packed hall of the hotel.

Dr Mahathir made the claim after he had been asked how Parliament could be used to seek a no-confidence vote against Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said Umno must bring Najib down in order to win in the next general election.

The former prime minister said it was the party's responsibility to ensure its fight and struggles of the race, religion and country were upheld.

Dr Mahathir said he did not support Najib, who is also the Umno president, and said Umno must pressure Najib to step down.

"This is not personal but Najib cannot win the next election. When I make such a prediction, there is basis to it. His father built Umno, the son is burying it," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Najib had not answered a lot of questions including the IMalaysia Development Bhd (IMDB) issue, and the estimated sum of between RM14bil and RM20bil which was unaccounted for.

He said he was ready to have a debate with Najib over the IMDB issue.

To a question by Datuk Tamiin Ghafar, the son of former deputy prime minister

Tun Ghafar Baba, Dr Mahathir said: "I have the capability to debate, if Najib wants, we can debate, it should not be a problem."

Dr Mahathir said it took him a long time to reach the stage where he openly declared that Najib should step down.

"I have negotiated, advised and talked to Najib, but all that did not bring any effect, and I don't like to bring people down, but there is a lot that he has done which does not fall into place.

"The younger generation is shying away from Umno, and under his leadership, the party is getting a bad name.

"We are not only talking about support from Umno members for the next elections, but also from the non-members, and other races," he said.

Dr Mahathir said when leaders were given powers, they should fight for the struggles of the people, and not do things which benefited them.

"His (Najib) father was so humble and used to cycle to villages, this is the way leaders should be, but his son only meets division leaders.

"So, it is time for Umno to do something to save the party, and the future of the country," he added.