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'Mahathir should apologise first'

The Star - 11/11/2016

Pandikar: No truth to Dr M's claim that there's no democracy in Parliament

FORMER prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad should apologise first for abolishing the Parliamentary Services Act during his tenure, before talking about upholding the parliamentary institution, Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia said.

The Dewan Rakyat Speaker said Dr Mahathir was responsible for abolishing the Act, which aimed to separate the powers of the Executive, the Judiciary and the Legislative branches of government.

"This matter seems to be missing in their resolutions that seek to uphold the parliamentary institution," Pandikar said, referring to the calls by the Opposition.

"In 1992, when he (Dr Mahathir) was in office, he abolished this Act, which was crucial for any parliamentary institution in the world.

"Why? This is the question Opposition MPs should be asking him," he told a press conference here yesterday.

Pandikar was responding to Dr Mahathir, who claimed on Tuesday that democracy no longer exists within Parliament's walls.

This came in the wake of three former Cabinet members being investigated by the police for their speeches in the Dewan Rakyat.

Dr Mahathir, who became Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Pribumi) chairman after leaving Umno earlier this year, said he was saddened by the current state of Parliament.

During his meeting with the Opposition on Tuesday, he said that during the tenure of (first

prime minister) Tunku Abdul Rahman, all lawmakers were free to speak in Parliament without having to face the possibility of being arrested, except when they broke the law or tried to instigate racial issues.

To this, Pandikar said one should not make a comparison between previous administrations and the current one.

He said there have been many changes in the parliamentary institution over the decades, and the number of Opposition lawmakers has significantly increased.

Citing an example, Pandikar said the House even disallowed a motion by Lim Kit Siang in 1988 when he was Tanjong MP.

The motion, he said, sought to discuss the RM10bil losses suffered by the Government-backed Perwaja Steel.

"There were not many Opposition MPs then and there were fewer cases of lawmakers breaching the Standing Orders.

"But now, they would want to debate everything under the sun, even urging me to stop the Inspector-General of Police from investigating (the former Cabinet members)."

Pandikar also maintained Parliament has always practised democracy, with Opposition lawmakers given space and time to debate.

Watch the video
thestartv.com

