

I wanted to resign because Parliament seen as rubber stamp, says Pandikar
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By Hasbullah Awang Chik

Among the grouses Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia had in wanting to resign was the perception that the Malaysian Parliament was seen as a rubber stamp for decisions by the executive.

The Speaker of the lower house, in explaining his retraction of his resignation letter today, said he had told Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak that he wanted reforms to be implemented so that Parliament and the Speaker's office would not longer appear as if they only acted on the orders of the government.

"It is not true that I tendered my resignation because I was unhappy with the toilets or furniture in the Parliament building.

"I tendered based on my desire to restore dignity to Parliament and make it a first-class parliament on par with other parliaments in the world," he said at a press conference at his official residence in Kuala Lumpur today.

"I am disappointed with the perception that the Speaker works under the orders of the executive body," Pandikar Amin also said.

Among the reforms he wanted was the removal of the minister in charge of Parliament so that Parliament was fully in charge of his own administration. The minister with this portfolio is usually a minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Pandikar Amin also said he wanted the select committee system instituted, in addition to the five existing standing committees. Select committees, as practiced in other parliaments, would enable better scrutiny and debates of new bills, he said.

He also wanted the Parliament building to be upgraded to have infrastructure and facilities that were on par with government buildings in Putrajaya and with the Palace of Justice.

Pandikar Amin said Najib had listened to these proposals and asked for time to fulfil them, as these matters had to be approved by the Cabinet.

He said Najib subsequently informed him that the Cabinet meeting on April 10 had discussed some of these matters and agreed that Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin would oversee the implementation of some of these changes.

Pandikar Amin today said that such reforms had been on his agenda since the last general election in 2013.

He also said he wanted to uphold the concept of separation of powers between the legislative and the executive branches of government.

"This is my seventh year as Speaker. If there are no changes as what I have proposed, I won't hesitate to write again to the prime minister of my resignation.

"If what I have suggested is not implemented by the executive in the remainder of this Parliament's term, I will resubmit by resignation.

"There is no need for others to announce that the Speaker has resigned. If the prime minister won't accept my resignation, I myself can announce it," he said.

Pandikar Amin explained his intended resignation and subsequent retraction today after being forced to deny it when former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced it over the weekend.

The Dewan Rakyat Speaker said he had met Najib, who did not want to read his resignation letter but who had listened to his grouses instead and told him to stay on.

On May 9, however, Najib at the 2015 Parliament and State Legislative Assembly Speakers conference in Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, said Malaysia's Parliament did not rubber-stamp bills and decisions by the executive.

The prime minister said this had been proven as MPs were given the opportunity to suggest changes to bills during debates.

"The executive – including myself – has never considered Parliament as a mere rubber stamp. On the contrary, I deeply appreciate the quality of the debates, including the suggestions brought up by the MPs in the debates in Parliament," Najib had said in his speech then. – May 19, 2015.

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