

## **PAS distances itself from Ambiga over gay rights**

**Malaysiakini.com**

**November 4, 2011**

PAS leaders have moved to distance the party from Bersih 2.0 chief Ambiga Sreenevasan, who was slated to open the Seksualiti Merdeka festival on Nov 9 - which police have banned.

The Islamic party's spiritual leader Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat criticised Ambiga for backing the event and called on the government to take stern action against its organisers, Sinar Harian reported today.

NONE "We support Ambiga in welfare matters but when it concerns actions that go against religion, we do not support," Nik Aziz is quoted as saying.

Utusan Malaysia in its report on the issue quoted Bachok MP Nasharuddin Mat Isa of PAS as questioning Ambiga's endorsement of the festival.

As a senior lawyer, Nasharuddin said, Ambiga should have known the position of Islam in the country and the reaction that the programme would provoke, Utusan reported

He said the PAS central body has yet to declare its position on Seksualiti Merdeka as it was a "sensitive matter" but that the party would do so in due time.

Seksualiti Merdeka is an annual festival celebrating the human rights of people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and is backed by several NGOs, including the Bar Council, Suaram and Amnesty International.

The festival's programmes include forums, talks, workshops, book launches, an art exhibition and stage performances.

However, the police yesterday declared a ban on all its activities, citing public order concerns.

At this time it is still unclear whether Seksualiti Merdeka's programmes will go ahead as its organisers have yet to decide their next course of action.