

**'PAS can give a non-Muslim senior party post'**  
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**S Pathmawathy**

PAS is prepared to allocate a senior party post to a non-Muslim if the need arises, its central committee member Dzulkefly Ahmad told a forum today.

It would augur well with the Islamist party, Dzulkefli (right) said, to contest in non-Muslim localities, which until the 2008 general election had predominantly contested in only Muslim-majority constituencies.

He pointed out that PAS' "inclusiveness" was recognised when the party made gains at the Kota Raja parliamentary constituency, where Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud won the seat a majority of more than 20,000.

He told participants at the 'Why is the Malay vote split?' forum hosted by Kumpulan Karangraf, the publisher of Malay language daily Sinar Harian and a score of popular magazines, that PAS' opponents "can never comprehend" how the Islam-based party could be accepted by non-Muslims.

"PAS, like most of the Islamist political parties in the Middle East, has been affected by the Arab Spring," the Kuala Selangor MP added.

It was at this juncture that forum moderator Maszlee Malik, a Universiti Islam Antarabangsa humanities lecturer, asked whether PAS would be open to accepting a non-Muslim into its ranks, as had Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) that had appointed Coptic thinker Rafiq Habib as one of its vice-presidents.

"Yes, we are ready. PAS is inclusive as seen with our commitment to establishing a 'Welfare State' (Negara Berkeadilan) and 'PAS for all' concepts. We aim to be an active player in new politics," he replied.

Later, at the media conference, Dzulkefly explained that "when the need arises" the party is prepared to emulate FJP's decision as it is only a matter of "governance".

"The fundamental principle is that there are some things in Islam which are definite and some that are not. This is not, it is a matter of governance," he said.

Quizzed whether the time is right for such a change in the party's ranks, he said: "Maybe the time has not come (but) when it is raised we will discuss about it in the muktamar (annual general assembly) and we will decide on it together.

"This is only an administrative matter. We cannot say it will never happen because Islam can address change for intellectual renewal. Islam can withstand the challenge of time and realities," he reiterated.