

Give PAS professionals time to prove their mettle
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Beh Lih Yi and Muda Mohd Noor

PAS vice-president Husam Musa has asked the party to give its young turks - who swept into power two years ago - more time to prove themselves.

He made this call ahead of the party elections slated for next month.

The Kelantan-based politician also confessed that he was "unhappy" with his performance as vice-president and that the opposition Islamic-based party was still searching for a direction since its dismal performance in the 2004 polls.

"(We) need more time to familiarise ourselves (with the positions), then it will give us confidence and ascertain a direction for the party which can be carried out effectively," he told malaysiakini during an interview in Kuala Lumpur early this week.

Husam is among the young turks in the party and part of what is called the 'professionals' faction led by Nasharuddin Mat Isa. They secured a big win in the 2005 party elections.

Nasharuddin was elected deputy president and apart from Husam, two others from the faction became vice-presidents as well - Mohamad Sabu and Dr Hasan Ali.

The move was seen as part of the party's re-branding attempt after its major setback in the 2004 general election.

Despite being returned as president, Abdul Hadi Awang, who belongs to the traditional ulama faction, has kept a low profile since then.

Be fair to us

Meanwhile, Husam said he and his colleagues have spent the last two years going down to meet the grassroots and initiated projects like TV PAS. They also set up the party's new headquarters in Kuala Lumpur (photo).

"Like me, the same goes for Nasharuddin. Perhaps he doesn't have the confidence immediately (after he was elected) ... that he is on the top (leadership) and will have to decide on important matters. Please be fair to us," added the Kelantan state exco member.

The leadership of the young turks came into question following the possibility that Nasharuddin could face a challenge from Dewan Ulama wing head Harun Taib in the coming party polls.

The biennial party election and annual meet is slated to take place in Kelantan from June 1 to 3.

Asked to comment on the upcoming party elections, Husam appeared rather evasive.

"No official release has been issued to confirm that there would be a contest (for No 2). Harun is not necessarily going to contest, it will be too premature to comment (at this point)," he

said.

Husam said the public should not perceive this as a division in the party. He added that the terms - professionals and ulamas - were introduced to show that the party had participation from all levels.

Succession issue

The PAS leader also appeared guarded when quizzed on the succession plan in Kelantan, which is controlled by the party.

Husam is being touted as Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat's handpicked successor should the party retain the state in the coming elections.

At present, Husam has been given the important portfolio of economic planning in the state government and has represented Nik Aziz at official functions several times.

However, he has rejected the 'acting menteri besar' label.

"Tok guru (Nik Aziz) is testing me but I think I am not qualified for a more important role yet. Tok guru is going to contest in the next general election, there is no question on who is going to lead PAS Kelantan in the next election," he said.

Husam said he wanted a "rest" from active politics in the next few years. He said he has not planned his political career and will let Nik Aziz decide his role.

He said succession should not be only seen as one individual replacing another, but a team of calibrated leaders replacing one individual.

"Tok guru needs a good and encouraging line up of team members who can get the confidence of the people.

"(Leader) like Kamaruddin Jaafar (PAS secretary-general)... he has a good personality, why shouldn't he be tested at the state level?" he added.

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