

**Hadi: New HQ location not a problem**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**May 21, 2007**  
**Ooi Kelly**

PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang has denied that the party has opened itself to criticism in the forthcoming general election over the location of its new headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

At a press conference this afternoon following the official opening of the building in Jalan Raja Laut, he said the Islamic opposition party would be able to defend its decision.

The building is near the Lorong Haji Taib red-light district.

Spiritual advisor Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat had obviously anticipated the issue, for he addressed it in his speech during the inauguration ceremony.

Addressing some 100 people, he said it was "not a problem that the building is situated in an area without a high concentration of Malays".

"PAS opened this building for people to get to know the party and Islam," he explained.

Among those present were the DAP's Ronnie Liu and Parti Keadilan Rakyat advisor Anwar Ibrahim and leaders Azmin Ali, Tian Chua and Shamsul Iskandar.

During the 20-minute press conference, Nik Abdul Aziz expressed hope that more Chinese would become leaders in PAS in future.

"According to Islamic history, the religious scripts are not written by Arabs and in terms of leadership, Arabs seldom ruled. The ones who led are Indians, Spanish, Turks and others," he said.

"When the Chinese embrace Islam, they are prepared to learn and are able to better understand the religion compared to Malays who are Muslim by birth."

Asked to comment if the pay rise just announced for civil servants amounts to an election sweetener, he replied: "He (premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) has done this so near the elections, therefore there are (such) allegations."

Party chief Abdul Hadi Awang said the PAS assembly on June 1-3 in Kota Baru expects to improve the rapport between professionals and ulama.

He also said the party is prepared for the general election, but would not be drawn into speculating on the timing - "Ask the PM" was all he would say.

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