

Nasharudin says never considered joining Umno
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 21 — Under fire for criticising the PAS leadership, Nasharudin Mat Isa came out today to affirm his loyalty to the party, saying he had never once considered leaving it for Umno.

He shook off claims that his apparent show of hostility towards the party lately was because he had allowed himself to become embroiled in Umno's political game.

Instead, Nasharudin (picture) chided his accusers for using such a "simple reason" to judge his political stand.

"Throughout my involvement in PAS, which I accept as a platform to give a voice to Muslims here, I have never said that I would join Umno.

"Thus, for the umpteenth time, I affirm that I have no intention whatsoever, however minute, to join Umno," he said.

Nasharudin, formerly PAS's secretary-general, earned the ire of party leaders when he told Umno-owned Berita Minggu over the weekend that the leadership should not be too preoccupied with the party's political goals while abandoning its Islamic ones.

He said that PAS was no longer seen as being "consistent" with its Islamic image and that it could not afford to continually chop and change "terminologies" to suit its political direction.

With his words, the outspoken leader appears to have joined the ranks of Datuk Dr Hasan Ali, another senior party leader who recently said the same, pointing to the shift to push the concept of a "Negara Berkebajikan" at the party's annual general meeting earlier this year.

But Nasharudin insisted today that his words did not mean that he had plans to abandon the party or its ideals, adding that any accusation that questioned his loyalty was "too far from the truth".

"I hope my brief explanation is sufficient to reaffirm my loyalty to PAS," he said.

"I emphasise here that I am a PAS member, and my struggle remains with PAS, to uphold the message of Islam to the community whatever the situation."