

## **Pas confirms candidacy of Hadi, Nik Aziz**

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**By Mazlinda Mahmood**

KUALA LUMPUR: Pas has confirmed the candidacy of its top two leaders, president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang and its spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat in the coming general election.

Citing the two veteran Pas leaders as still commanding the grassroots' full support as the reason, secretary general Datuk Mustafa Ali said the party would not allow either leaders to forgo contesting in the country's most crucial election.

Both leaders had earlier expressed intention to step down but last week, Nik Aziz, who has served as an elected representative for 45 years, announced his intention to contest stating that he had been asked to stay on.

The Kelantan Menteri Besar also urged Abdul Hadi to follow suit and defend his seat in the coming election.

Speaking at a press conference after chairing the party's central committee meeting today, Abdul Hadi said he would prefer to focus on preparing the party to face the polls, but left the final decision to the party.

"I have been a state assemblyman for 30 years and a parliamentarian for more than 10 years, so I hope I can be given more time to focus on the party this time," he said.

"But the party decision is, we won't allow that to happen," Mustafa immediately responded.

However, it was not yet decided if Abdul Hadi would defend both his Rhu Rendang state seat and Marang parliament seat.

In Nik Aziz's case, Abdul Hadi said there was strong lobbying from Kelantan Pas and the people for him to continue on and denied that the Pas-led state did not have a qualified candidate to replace the 81-year old Pas veteran.

"This is not true. Nik Aziz has been assisted by so many exco members, some of whom still hold a position in the state government today," he said.

Conspicuously absent from the meeting yesterday was Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Azizan Abdul Razak.

The unapologetic Azizan was mired in controversy surrounding the suspension of five Kolej Universiti Insaniah (Kuin) students and had been "under siege" from fellow party members and Pakatan allies who were upset that he invoked the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) 1971 against the five students, contrary to the tenets of Pakatan's Buku Jingga.

However, Azizan later cited that he had used the Private Higher Education Institute Act 1996 (Act 555) and not UUCA against the students who were found guilty of staging a protest against the state-run college last April.

The Kedah Pas commissioner, who is also one of Pas' central committee members, was expected to attend the meeting to explain his actions to the party's top leaders.

Pas deputy president Mohamad Sabu, when contacted, said Azizan had not given any reason why he was absent and the Kuin issue was not brought up at the two-hour meeting at Pas headquarters.

"He is a Menteri Besar, I'm sure he has his reasons. We'll ask about that later," he said.

Source: <http://www.nst.com.my/latest/pas-confirms-candidacy-of-hadi-nik-aziz-1.45567>