

**PAS MP says party ready for non-Muslim leaders**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

SHAH ALAM, Feb 28 — PAS research chief Dzulkefly Ahmad said today the Islamic party is ready to accept non-Muslims in positions as high as deputy president.

The Kuala Selangor MP said the party was ready to emulate Egypt's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), which appointed Coptic Christian intellectual Rafiq Habib as its vice president last year.

"The fundamental principle is that there are some things in Islam which are mandatory and some that are not. This is not," Dzulkefly told reporters after speaking at a forum titled "Why are Malay votes split?"

The PAS central committee member had cited the Arab Spring, the wave of popular revolutions that began a year ago and toppled dictators in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia.

The moderator Maszlee Malik then asked if PAS was ready to follow in the footsteps of the FJP, the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, who appointed Habib after Hosni Mubarak was forced to resign as Egyptian president.

"Yes, we are ready. PAS is inclusive as seen with our Negara Berkebajikan and PAS for all concepts. We aim to be an active player in new politics," Dzulkefly responded.

The International Islamic University lecturer posed the question again during a press conference later, asking if PAS would accept a non-Muslim deputy president.

Dzulkefly replied that the matter can be discussed if it is proposed.

"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," he said.

Tensions between Muslims and Christians have resulted in Islamic NGOs going on a national roadshow under the banner of Himpunan Sejuta Umat (Gathering of a Million Faithful) to rally Muslims against "the challenge of Christianisation."

Allegations that Christians are trying to convert Muslims peaked last August when the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (Jais) raided the Damansara Utama Methodist Church (DUMC) in Petaling Jaya.

This came after repeated disputes between church and mosque, such as the legal battle over the the use of the word Allah to refer to the Christian god.

An initial court ruling allowing the Catholic Church to use the term Allah had led to places of worship being firebombed in January 2010.

The government also buckled under pressure and ordered the release of Malay-language bibles seized before Sarawakians, half of whom are Christians, voted in the April 16, 2011 state polls.

Before the Jais raid, Umno's Utusan Malaysia and Malay rights lobby Perkasa accused the DAP of conspiring to turn Malaysia into a Christian state.

Although DUMC has denied Jais' claims, Utusan Malaysia fanned the flames with allegations that Christian groups in Kuala Lumpur and Johor were actively trying to convert Muslims.

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