

**PAS polls: Hasan out, Hadi remains chief**  
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**Beh Lih Yi**

Dr Hasan Ali, one of the three PAS vice-presidents, has opted not to defend his post in the party election slated for Friday in Kelantan after declining the nominations he received.

His withdrawal, confirmed by secretary-general Kamaruddin Jaffar to malaysiakini today, means there will be five contenders for the three vice-presidential posts.

They are the two incumbents Husam Musa (photo) and Mohamad Sabu, information chief Ahmad Awang, PAS Johor commissioner Dr Mahfodz Mohamad and ex-Youth chief Mahfuz Omar.

"The number of nominations received by the candidates cannot be ascertained as yet because we are still doing the final round of checking and confirmation," Kamaruddin said.

The candidates' list was initially scheduled to be announced today after a meeting of the central working committee - the party's highest decision-making body - in Kota Bahru this morning.

"Now we have up till midnight tonight to let the candidates decline nomination or for us to be informed on any nomination that has yet to be recorded. We will officially announce the final list tomorrow," Kamaruddin explained.

Hasan, who is also PAS Selangor commissioner and a motivational speaker, could not be reached for immediate comment as he did not return calls or respond to voice messages.

It is also understood that Hasan was missing from the CWC meeting.

Party insiders believed his pullout is linked to the low number of nominations he has received.

"He has not performed since the last party election two years ago and the majority of the divisions in Selangor - his base - did not nominate him," said an insider, who requested anonymity.

Of the five contenders, the chances look good for incumbents Husam - a prime mover in Kelantan government policies - and Mohamad, a former Kuala Kedah MP who is known for his fiery and witty oratory skills. The duo are said to have topped the nomination list.

### **Tussle anticipated**

The nominations for the vice-presidency also proved what is widely seen as a tussle between the conservative ulama (religious scholars) led by deputy president hopeful Harun Taib and the Young Turks led by Nasharuddin Mat Isa.

Ahmad and Mahfodz are both from the ulama faction while the other three belong to the more progressive group of Young Turks who swept into power two years ago.

Ahmad, a close associate to PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim, was an one-time head of the

Malaysian Ulama Association while Mahfodz had led an angry protest last year against the Article 11 forum in Johor to discuss religious freedom in Malaysia.

Observers widely believed that the Young Turks, who may face harsh criticism of their leadership during the muktamar (annual meeting), will retain power given the possibility of a snap general election.

"The challenge from the ulama is a signal that 'we are watching you'," said a party worker.

The winds of change in PAS in the 2005 party polls followed its dismal performance in the 2004 general election. PAS lost Terengganu and was on the brink of losing Kelantan which it has ruled since 1990.

Since then, the party has gone on a rebranding exercise including new leadership, playing down its intention to set up an Islamic state and organising numerous programmes to reach out to youths and non-Muslims.

### **Dewan Muslimat**

The PAS secretary-general also confirmed it will be a straight fight between Harun and Nasharuddin - a former academician - for the deputy president's post.

Harun, who heads the influential Dewan Ulama, has decided not to defend his post, therefore paving the way for a straight fight between Kelantan Dewan Ulama chief Mohamad Daud and Dr Mohamad Daud, an ex-lecturer.

Both Mohamad Dauds' are from Kelantan, also sitting on the party's highest body Majlis Syura Ulama (Religious Consultative Council). The first Mohamad Daud is also the Demit state representative.

Kamaruddin said president Abdul Hadi Awang (photo) and PAS Youth chief Salahuddin Ayub have won their posts uncontested.

The deputy PAS Youth chief's post was won uncontested by newcomer, Pahang PAS Youth chief Nasaruddin Tantawi, after incumbent Idris Ahmad chose not to defend the post.

However, there will be a three-cornered fight for the Youth vice-presidency between current secretary Ahmad Sabky Yusof, Kelantan PAS Youth chief Mohd Zaki Ibrahim and Terengganu PAS Youth chief Azman Shaprawi Abdul Rani.

In the women's wing or Dewan Muslimat, chief Azizah Mat Khatib will be challenged by Federal Territory Muslimat chief Nuridah Salleh, who has actively involved in the anti-Internal Security Act campaign.

The No 2 post will see Selangor Muslimat chief Wan Hasrina Wan Hassan make her second attempt to take on incumbent Dr Lo' Lo' Ghazali (photo).

The Muslimat vice-president's post was won by senator Siti Zailah Mohd Yusof unopposed.

The three-day muktamar will kick off on Friday with some 1,000 delegate casting their votes in the afternoon. The results are expected to be announced on Sunday.

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