

In GE13, PAS reformists take a hit
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 6 — Three PAS moderates lost in Election 2013, possibly slowing moves to soften the Islamist party's fundamentalist image that for long turned off a wider audience.

PAS has campaigned on the concept of an Islamic welfare state and even fielded non-Muslim candidates in the May 5 general election, but only found support from voters in the Malay heartland.

PAS deputy president Mohamed Sabu lost in Pendang, Kedah by a 2,638-vote majority to Barisan Nasional's Datuk Othman Abdul, joining the PAS-led government that lost control of the rice-bowl state.

In 2008, Mat Sabu had contested in Kuala Terengganu but lost by 628 votes to BN's Datuk Razali Ismail. The popular leader has been described as the party's engine to Putrajaya by PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat.

Vice-president Datuk Husam Musa lost by more than 5,000 votes when his campaign in Putrajaya failed to defeat incumbent Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Mansor.

It was an uphill battle for the Kelantan executive councillor although he managed to draw interest among the electorate in the administrative capital, most of whom were civil servants.

In Selangor, PAS research chief Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad failed to keep Kuala Selangor, losing by about 400 votes. He had won the seat in 2008 by more than 800 votes.

The three men have been widening PAS's co-operation with allies DAP and PKR while going beyond just fundamentalist issues such as the Islamic hudud law — which was held up by MCA as evidence of a puritanical and intolerant government if they came to power.

Despite their popularity within and beyond the party, all three lost in their race to be in Parliament for the next five years, which analysts say may affect PAS's future.

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