

Shahidan offers Arau seat to Dr M to contest

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KUALA LUMPUR: Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim has offered the parliamentary seat of Arau to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad should the Prime Minister reconsider his plan not to seek re-election.

"Although my first intuition is that he should contest in Kubang Pasu, nothing should stop him from contesting elsewhere because he has the support of all Malaysians in the country," he said.

Shahidan said it would be up to the state leaders to make sure that the Prime Minister wins "handsomely" irrespective of where he stands.

"That is why I am asking him to come to Perlis should he change his mind. He will be surprised by the majority votes he will be garnering from there although he will be a newcomer to the constituency," he said.

Dr Mahathir has been the MP for Kubang Pasu since 1974 and is one of the longest serving parliamentarians in the country.

Rural Development Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid is currently the MP for Arau.

Shahidan said his offer was not new, as he had asked Dr Mahathir to stand in Perlis years ago.

On Monday, Shahidan asked Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president and Barisan Nasional chairman, to consid-

er contesting for the Putrajaya seat in the next election.

Clarifying it, Shahidan said: "The point here is that he should be welcomed to contest anywhere he wants and it is the responsibility of the party to ensure he wins with the best possible majority."

He said furthermore, it was Dr Mahathir who developed Putrajaya and he should be the first choice representative of the new constituency.

In a related development, Kubang Pasu Umno wants Dr Mahathir to continue leading the division

Division secretary Shamsudin Ahmad said Dr Mahathir had informed the division four months ago that he was reviewing his position as the Kubang Pasu MP but had assured the leaders he would stay as division chief and continue to head the division.

"This is why his recent announcement in Alor Star did not come as a surprise. However, we still want him to reconsider his decision," he said in an interview.

In Kangar, Azmi said the people should respect Dr Mahathir's decision to retire from the political arena.

However, it would be difficult for the people to forget the contributions of Dr Mahathir, he told reporters after attending the opening of the Northern Malaysia University College of Engineering (Kukum) temporary campus yesterday.