

Haron to stand in either Perlis or Kedah

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KUALA LUMPUR: The new PAS information chief Datuk Dr Haron Din has confirmed he will contest the next general election in Kedah or Perlis but dismissed the notion that he will be *mentri besar* in the event of a PAS win.

Dr Haron, who withdrew as a candidate on the eve of the 1999 polls, said he might contest a Parliament as well as a state seat in the two states if the party so decided.

He said the question of him becoming *mentri besar* did not arise because the post was usually associated with the party's state commissioner.

"I have been offered any seat in Kedah or Perlis but I would personally prefer to contest a parliamentary seat in Perlis. I am from Perlis and I have a house there," he said.

PAS is banking on the retired Islamic studies professor to spearhead its bid to control the northern states in the next general election. Since his appointment to the information post last month, he has been introduced at various PAS *ceramah* as "the next *mentri besar* of

Perlis."

Dr Haron, 63, is a household name among Malays because he used to be a speaker on Forum Perdana, the nationally-televised religious lectures sponsored by the Government. He is also famed for his unique talent for "spiritual healing."

However, he told at a press conference at the Harakah office yesterday that he was not a *bomoh* but an *ustaz* or religious teacher who used

Quranic knowledge to treat people suffering from spiritual and physical ailments.

He runs Darul Syifa, an Islamic clinic in Bangi where people arrive as early as 4am to queue up to see him.

"That is not my core business now. My priority now is politics," he said, adding that he had never been invited to the conference of *bomohs* in Kuala Lumpur.

He claimed that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's retirement would cause a swing of support to PAS in Kedah.

Many PAS supporters believed the party could have taken Kedah in 1999 if Dr Haron had not pulled out at the last moment.

He said he withdrew from the last election because he was then suffering from a heart ailment and had to deal with debts arising from standing guarantor for a huge loan.

He subsequently went overseas for a heart operation and has since settled his financial situation.

On his political style, he said he would not make personal attacks.