

Pas ulama chief will take on Nasharudin

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KUALA LUMPUR: Pas ulama chief Datuk Harun Taib has confirmed that he will challenge incumbent Nasharudin Mat Isa for the party's deputy presidency next week.

"I accept the offer and I have already submitted a letter to the party election committee," Harun said.

The deadline for candidates nominated by divisions to reply to the committee was yesterday.

Harun's acceptance bears out speculation that this year's party elections will see a showdown between Pas' Young Turks — a band of urbane leaders led by Nasharudin who swept to

power in the last party elections — and the group of older conservatives they routed.

Harun's bid for the deputy presidency this time around also mirrors the contest that took place in the last party elections two years ago.

That election saw Harun publicly throwing his support behind party stalwart Datuk Hassan Shukri for the number two post in the party. Hassan lost to Nasharudin in the straight fight.

Asked about his plans for Pas, Harun, the most senior Pas ulama after party spiritual adviser Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, said he would comment at length only if he won the post.

In another development, Pas Youth chief Salahuddin Ayub will retain his post un-

contested following his challenger's decision to pull out of the race.

A top Pas official said that Idris Ahmad, the current deputy chief of Pas Youth who received support from four states to challenge Salahuddin, had withdrawn.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity as Pas has yet to formally announce the candidates, said the number two and three posts in Pas Youth — namely the deputy and vice chief — would also not be contested.

An agreement has been reached that will see Pahang Pas Youth chief Nasruddin Tantawi succeeding Idris as deputy Pas Youth chief.

Nasruddin, 37, is a University of Al-Azhar graduate who has led Pahang Pas Youth for

the past seven years.

Current Pas Youth secretary Ahmad Sabky Yusuf will assume the vice-chief's post, taking over from party activist Mazlan Aliman.

Salahuddin, a graduate in Human Development Sciences from Universiti Putra Malaysia, is one of the prime movers for the Young Turks' "engagement" agenda, a policy of reaching out to non-traditional groups such as non-Muslims and youths to expand Pas' support base.

Party secretary general Datuk Kamaruddin Jaafar, when contacted, said an announcement on the candidates who would be contesting may be made on Wednesday in Kota Baru, which will host this year's party annual general assembly and elections.