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PM: I did not give Harris my blessings

KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has dismissed talks that he gave his blessings for former Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh to take over the leadership of Parti Barisan Rakyat Sabah Bersekutu.

The Prime Minister refuted claims that he met Harris prior to his announcement that he would lead Bersekutu.

The Umno Supreme Council had at its meeting last Monday expelled Harris from the party for contravening its constitution by joining Bersekutu.

Dr Mahathir said although Harris claimed that he had resigned from Umno, the party did not receive any document on his resignation.

He said Umno had in fact expelled Harris.

Dr Mahathir also said Bersekutu and the Parti Bersatu Sabah, another Opposition party in the State, would not be accepted into the BN even if they won the next State election.

"There is only one BN and that's the one that is here now... we will not accept any party before or after the elections," he said, adding that Bersekutu and PBS had chosen to oppose the BN.

On whether Harris' return to active politics would jeopardise the State BN's strength, Dr Mahathir said he (Harris) could be a spoiler because one or two votes could cause the defeat of a candidate.

"He has big nuisance value and we don't need nuisance," the Prime Minister said.

He said Harris had his chance (to lead the State) but he ruined it and was now trying to get the people to forget how much they disliked him.

Harris was Chief Minister under the Berjaya State Government from 1976 to 1985 after which he was unseated by the PBS.

"The people threw him out `log, stock and barrel'." Although, Dr Mahathir said, Harris was once his good friend, he (Dr Mahathir) did not want to have anything to do with people who had spoiled everything when they were in power.

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