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Parti Bersekutu surprised over Harris' expulsion from Umno

KOTA KINABALU, Tues. - Parti Bersekutu is surprised over the expulsion of former Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh from Umno, claiming that he had already resigned from the party on March 6.

Its deputy secretary general Ibrahim Kalali said Harris' resignation letter was sent to the Ramsay Umno branch secretary and a copy to the Labuan Umno division secretary.

A photostat copy of Harris' resignation letter was distributed to the Press by Ibrahim.

"Therefore the question of Harris' expulsion from Umno does not arise," Ibrahim said.

He was commenting on the Umno supreme council decision last night to expel Harris from Umno for joining Bersekutu.

Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the decision was taken as the Umno constitution does not allow any of its members to join another party.

Harris, who was Chief Minister from 1976 to 1985 under the Parti Berjaya Government, was appointed as Bersekutu's acting president on March 29 when he was allegedly still an Umno member.

Ibrahim said Harris had also publicly declared that he had resigned from Umno when he announced his decision to join Bersekutu at a gathering here on March 29.

"Why is it necessary for Umno to make a political issue out of Harris' Umno membership two months after his resignation from the party?" he said.

He also said that Harris resigned from Umno on grounds that the Federal leadership "had enforced many of its policies on Sabah people although these were unacceptable to the majority of the local people."

Ibrahim claimed that the system to rotate the Chief Minister's post was not acceptable to a great majority of Sabah Umno members and yet it was enforced in the State.

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