

17 JAN 2000

Harris-Umno

SARAWAK SHOULD NOT DISMISS UMNO QUICKLY, SAYS HARRIS

KOTA KINABALU, Jan 17 (Bernama) -- Former Sabah chief minister and veteran politician Datuk Harris Mohamed Salleh said today Sarawak should not quickly dismiss the idea of having Umno in the state.

"Sarawak should not look at the players. It should look at the play because politics is the art of the possible," he said in a statement. here.

Harris said this in response to Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud's statement that former defence minister and former Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) deputy-president Datuk Abang Bakar Mustapha's intention to bring Umno to Sarawak was against the Barisan Nasional's (BN) principle.

Taib, who is also Sarawak BN chief and PBB president, had said that Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohammad had repeatedly described PBB, the lynchpin of the state's BN, as being just like Umno in Sarawak.

Harris said it would be a folly to claim that PBB is Umno in Sarawak.

"PBB is not Umno and Umno can never be PBB," he said.

Harris said the current national and international scenario dictated that Umno needed all the strength it could get to protect the national interests and the nation itself.

"It will be, therefore, necessary to merge not only the big businesses and financial institutions but also the political parties to put up a united front to fight the intruders," he said.

He also expressed surprise at the claim that the extension of Umno to Sarawak was against the principles of BN and Umno because such a move would be for the overall good of the community and the nation.

He said that previously the United Sabah National Organisation (Usno) had also believed that it was Umno in Usno's garb and there was no need for Umno to establish itself in Sabah.

"Eventually, Usno had to admit that it could not protect the interests of the community it represented and invited Umno to the state," he said.

Harris said Usno and Umno both realised that without Umno in Sabah, the political stability of the state could not be achieved.

In the case of Sarawak, he said, the Sarawak people should be allowed to decide whether or not they wanted Umno.

"In the final analysis, Malaysia is more important than the individuals. We, therefore, must strive to create a Malaysia as envisaged by the founding fathers," he said.

-- BERNAMA

hak JK