

Despite possible error, Saifuddin insists EC deputy is Umno member
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By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

KUALA LUMPUR, May 6 — Datuk Saifuddin Nasution refused today to admit he may have been wrong in accusing the Election Commission's (EC) Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar of being an Umno branch member from Kubang Buggor, Pasir Mas.

The PKR secretary-general insisted that his "mistake" did not mean Wan Ahmad was not an Umno member, pointing out that the EC deputy chairman had previously admitted to joining the country's biggest Malay party.

"That might have happened (the mistake). Umno has 3.3 million members nationwide; I might have mistaken which branch Wan Ahmad belongs to.

"But the onus is now on Wan Ahmad himself. He has previously admitted to being an Umno member, only that he could not remember when... so tell us, which branch does he belong to?" Saifuddin told The Malaysian Insider.

The EC deputy head has repeatedly denied allegations that he is an Umno member, calling the accusation "lies" aimed at tarnishing the credibility of the polls body.

Wan Ahmad's remarks have been contradictory, as he had admitted to Sinar Harian last week that he was an Umno member but claimed he could not remember which branch he was registered with.

Sinar Harian also carried a report today quoting Umno member Wan Ahmad Wan Omar as saying Saifuddin had confused him with EC deputy Datuk Wan Ahmad, and that both of them coincidentally shared the same name.

The stall trader said he felt "compelled" to come out and refute Saifuddin's claims, and that he sympathised with Datuk Wan Ahmad who was subject to much criticism over the issue.

(Wan Ahmad) has previously admitted to being an Umno member ... so tell us, which branch does he belong to? — Saifuddin Nasution

"Whatever it is, Datuk Wan Ahmad's statements have been contradictory — first he says he is, and now he says he is not an Umno member.

"Even if he is not a member from Pasir Mas, he should disclose which branch he belongs to... an admission is an admission," said Saifuddin.

When asked whether he had verified Sinar Harian's report today on Umno's Wan Ahmad not being the same person as the EC deputy head, the Machang MP said, "I have not checked with my sources."

PKR secretary-general Saifuddin claimed last week that the EC deputy chief is a member of

the Kubang Bunggor Umno branch in Pasir Mas, Kelantan and that his membership number is 2374564.

Wan Ahmad, however, denied this, and said that Saifuddin was actually referring to an Umno member with a similar name.

The EC was heavily criticised in the lead-up to Bersih's rally for free and fair elections on July 9 last year in which tens of thousands flooded the streets of the capital in chaotic scenes that saw over 1,500 arrested, scores injured and the death of an ex-soldier.

Widespread condemnation of the Najib administration's clampdown saw Putrajaya make major concessions including the formation of a bipartisan Parliamentary Select Committee to look into improving the electoral system.

During the committee's six-month tenure, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) accused the EC of not being committed to reforms and eventually rejected the panel's findings, which then led to last Saturday's Bersih 3.0 rally.

The coalition of 84 civil societies said last month that the findings of the select committee were disappointing and did not meet its demands for electoral reform.

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