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6 JAN 1996

Rahim-Youth

UMNO YOUTH MEETING FACES DIFFICULTY IN REINSTATING ABDUL RAHIM

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 6 (Bernama) -- The Umno Youth exco monthly meeting here on Monday will face difficulty in reaching consensus on the issue of handing back the movement's leadership to Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik who resigned from the post in late 1993.

The assumption is based on the conflicting views voiced by exco members of the movement at the state level with regard to the announcement last month by acting Youth leader Datuk Nazri Abdul Aziz who wanted to hand back the post to Abdul Rahim.

Although the Youth exco will be "at loggerheads" to find a solution, they are expected to reject Abdul Rahim's reinstatement purely on the grounds of upholding the party constitution and maintaining integrity in the eyes of the public.

The Umno Youth in four states -- Melaka, Kedah, Pulau Pinang and Sabah -- have vociferously rejected Abdul Rahim's reinstatement on grounds that it was against the party constitution while the Youth movements in the other states left it to the Supreme Council to decide.

Several exco members hinted at the possibility that the movement might unanimously reject Abdul Rahim as he (Rahim) had resigned from the post during the controversy which implicated him with an underaged girl in late 1993.

"The fact that Abdul Rahim resigned has nullified the Umno Youth's resolution made in 1993 which called on Tan Sri Abdul Rahim to withdraw temporarily until the controversy surrounding him was resolved.

"The resolution does not arise any more as Abdul Rahim had resigned," said a state Umno Youth leader who refused to be quoted.

"We do not reject Rahim but we place more importance on the constitution. If we don't adhere to the constitution, the people will certainly not respect Umno, a political party that represents and champions the rights of the Malays," he said.

The issue became a hot topic following the announcement by Nazri last month that he wanted to hand back the Youth leadership to Abdul Rahim as he (Rahim) had been cleared of the allegations over his relationship with an underaged girl as well as the two corruption charges.

Nazri said he made the announcement based on principle as well as adhering to the resolution passed by consensus by the Umno Youth exco.

A Youth exco member said the movement would submit its decision to the Umno Supreme Council and would ask the Council to respect the wishes of the movement.

It is in line with the statement of Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Dec 15 that the Supreme Council accepted whatever decision made by the Youth exco meeting on the issue.

Meanwhile, a political observer felt that although the constitution did not state that a Youth leader who had resigned could be reinstated, the matter could be decided upon by the Supreme Council.

From the point of view of the party's constitution, there are views that say that it is not contradictory because Clause 31 clearly states "when there is any contradiction in the interpretation of the constitution or the procedures of the Umno General Assembly made under its authority then the interpretation given by the Supreme Council is final."

The crisis faced by Umno Youth on the issue is also expected to "infect" the Umno Supreme Council meeting on Jan 15.

A Youth leader said if the Umno Supreme Council wanted to accept Abdul Rahim as leader of the Youth movement, considered Umno's right wing, then "the wing will soon break."

"UMNO Youth needs a leader that can continue to consolidate the movement to become an organisation that can contribute to national development," he said.

The political observer also felt that the decision to be reached at the Umno Youth exco meeting would become the yardstick in gauging its maturity in handling the problem as well as any other problems in future.

At the same time, it also tests the solidarity of the exco members as well as Nazri's credibility as its leader and his capability in assuming more important posts in future. -- BERNAMA