

Umno Youth to decide on Zahid's fate today

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PETALING JAYA: The fate of Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, a close ally of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, will be decided at the movement's special meeting today. *S 10. 9. 98*

The meeting is being called by Zahid after many executive committee members and state Youth leaders expressed their concerns over the ambiguous stand he has taken following Anwar's sacking from the party and Government.

Zahid supported the decision of the Umno supreme council to sack Anwar last Thursday but was later seen speaking at gatherings organised by the sacked deputy prime minister.

Several state Umno leaders have since called on Zahid to resign.

Perlis Umno Youth leader Zahidi Zainul Abidin said Zahid should resign if he wanted to join Anwar's reform movement.

Selangor Umno Youth chief Jaya Kesuma Rusman said the movement would only stand by

Zahid if he openly declared his support for party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and accepted the expulsion of Anwar.

When an informal meeting of the Umno Youth exco members was convened in Ampang on Tuesday, Zahid and three other exco members - secretary Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, Dr Abdul Rahim Ghouse and Ruslan Kassim - did not attend.

At the gathering chaired by Youth deputy chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein, 21 exco members agreed to con-

demn their colleagues and other Umno leaders who collaborated with Anwar.

Dr Rahim, who is Penang Youth chief, said he could not predict the outcome of today's meeting.

However, he added: "We are a group of rational people and I'm sure we will resolve issues amicably."

Ruslan, who is the Negri Sembilan Umno Youth chief, confirmed he would attend today's meeting, saying the

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exco might endorse the decision taken at the Ampang informal gathering on Tuesday.

"If what Hishammuddin said (about majority of the exco members agreeing with the informal meeting's decision) was true, we will see what the outcome will be at this meeting," he added.

According to the movement's constitution, Ruslan said, the exco had no right to expel or pass a vote of no confidence against the movement's chief.

However, he added, the exco members could recommend to the Umno supreme council to take any action against the chief, as had been done in the case of the movement's

former leader Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik.

When Rahim was faced with allegations of sexual misconduct in 1994, he took leave but was later reinstated by the party when he was cleared of all the allegations.

The Ampang gathering, although agreed to by 21 exco members, was attended by 16 members but the other five who could not attend were said to have agreed with the decision taken.

Those who could not attend but agreed with the decision were treasurer Mokhzani Mahathir, Samlih Juasih (Sabah), Khaled Nordin (Johor), Suhaimi Abdul Rahman (Selangor) and Jamal Nasir Rasdi (Perak).