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All 11 Youth divisions in Penang back Dr Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - All 11 Umno Youth divisions in Penang pledged their support for Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

State Youth chief Dr Abdul Rahim Ghouse said nine of the divisions also appealed to Dr Mahathir to reinstate Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to the party.

Abdul Rahim said they were confident that Anwar was still needed in the party.

"We still need the Dr Mahathir-Anwar team. The country has benefited tremendously from the two and we are not prepared to lose that (the team) just yet," he told a Press conference after chairing a two-hour meeting of the heads of 10 Youth divisions.

The head of the Tasik Gelugor Youth division Norazman Othman was not present as he had to attend to other matters.

The head of Kepala Batas Youth division Roslan Saidin, who was present, said the division did not join in the appeal for Anwar's reinstatement as it respected the supreme council's decision to expel Anwar.

Anwar was stripped of his positions as the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister on Wednesday.

Abdul Rahim said the appeal did not mean the nine divisions did not support Dr Mahathir's decision in dismissing Anwar.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik had said last week that expelled Umno members could apply to rejoin the party after three years.

The Umno Bukit Bendera division, which held a special meeting yesterday, decided to ask that Anwar be given a fair trial in defending himself against the allegations.

"As stated by Dr Mahathir before, we should not pronounce someone guilty until the courts have stated so.

"Anwar should be given a chance to explain his side to the people so that peace can be preserved in the country," the division said in a Press statement today.

The statement was signed by Bukit Bendera division chief Senator Datuk Ahmad Ismail, his deputy Azmi @ Iskandar S.H.O. Merican, its Youth wing leader Mohd Ismail Mohd Othman, deputy Youth chief Ismadi Abu Bakar, assistant secretary Syed Abdul Kadir Aidid, deputy Youth treasurer Azhar Ahmad and the division's Youth information chief Yahaya Ibrahim.

Other signatories were Bukit Bendera Wanita chief Haslinda Mohd Hashim and her deputy Asnah Hussain.

The division said it supported Dr Mahathir as Umno president and Prime Minister.

"We also support Anwar as both are personalities and leaders who are hard to replace," they added.

When the State Umno liaison committee met on Sunday to decide on the Anwar issue, no official from the Bukit Bendera division was present although seven had been invited. The State Umno meeting decided to back Dr Mahathir and the supreme council on the expulsion of Anwar from the party.

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