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Gerak defends action of Anwar supporters

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Malaysian People's Justice Movement (Gerak) today defended the action of some supporters of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in criticising the country and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad from abroad.

Its secretariat head Mahfuz Omar said their action was justifiable as these people had faced pressure when voicing their sentiments here.

He said: "Even Pas, a registered body, has been denied the right to speak publicly as police have rejected applications for it to hold ceramah."

Ironically, Mahfuz, who is also deputy Pas Youth chief, was saying this at a Press conference a day after Gerak chairman Datuk Fadzil Noor had said the movement was not out to champion Anwar.

Mahfuz's Press conference, held at Pas party headquarters in Taman Melewar, Batu Caves, was also to announce the stand of the so-called Save the People's Money Action Committee on the recent Renong Bhd RM10.5 billion debt restructuring proposal. It was also attended by foreign journalists.

Three supporters of the former Deputy Prime Minister - former Umno Youth assistant secretary Saifudin Nasution Ismail, former Penang Umno Youth chief Abdul Rahim Ghouse and Anwar's former political secretary Mohamad Ezam Mohd Noor - are reportedly abroad and lately had been faxing Press statements critical of the Government from Jakarta, Bangkok and Manila.

On Gerak's next move following its failure to hold a rally at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil, Mahfuz said the event would now be shifted to the Kubang Pasu parliamentary constituency in Kedah.

Asked how confident he was that a permit would be issued considering that the police had not given approval for the Barisan Nasional to hold a premier rally last Saturday at Bukit Jalil, Mahfuz said:

"Kedah Pas has met the State police and was told that as long as any gathering is held within a fenced up area, no permit is required."

On the Save the People's Money Action Committee, Mahfuz, who is its chairman, said the people's approval should be obtained first before any public funds were used to help ailing companies.

The committee, formed two months ago, is represented by Pas, Parti Rakyat Malaysia, Consumer Association of Penang, the Muslim Youth Movement, Teras Pengupayaan Melayu, the Hotel Employees' Union, Keretapi Tanah Melayu Workers Union, Gabungan Mahasiswa Islam Semenanjung, Persatuan Daya Pengeluaran Negara, the Kelantan Muslim Workers Association and the four student unions of Universiti Malaya, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

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