

10 SEP 1998

Zahid-Post

I WILL NOT RESIGN AS UMNO YOUTH CHIEF- ZAHID

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 10 (Bernama) -- Umno Youth Chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, seen as a strong supporter of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, said today he will not resign from the post and will leave it to the Umno Supreme Council to decide his position in the movement.

He said the movement's executive committee meeting today unanimously resolved that his position in the movement be decided by party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Umno Supreme Council.

Speaking to reporters after chairing a five-hour meeting of the committee, Ahmad Zahid said there were members of the committee who had asked him to resign over the question of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's removal from his government posts and expulsion from the party.

According to party members who were present, the meeting was held in a heated atmosphere with all 25 committee members being given the opportunity to speak.

However Umno Youth vice-head Datuk Hishamuddin Tun Hussein said the discussions were held rationally taking into account Umno's interests, unity and the party's image.

At the outset of the brief press conference, Ahmad Zahid said the Youth movement had unanimously accepted the decision announced by Hishamuddin on Tuesday.

Hishamuddin had stated on Tuesday that 21 of the 25 members of the Umno Youth executive committee supported the decision of the Umno Supreme Council to expel Anwar from the party and the Prime Minister's decision to sack him from the Cabinet.

He had also announced that the 21 members rejected the reform movement launched by Anwar.

On Tuesday, Hishamuddin had chaired a special meeting attended by 16 members of the Umno Youth Executive Committee while five others did not attend but agreed to go along with whatever decision taken.

Those who distanced themselves from the meeting were Ahmad Zahid, Ruslan Kassim (Negeri Sembilan Umno Youth Chief), Saifuddin Nasution (Assistant Secretary) and Dr Abdul Rahim Mohd Ghouse (Penang Umno Youth Chief)

Ahmad Zahid had earlier been pressured by Umno Youth leaders from the state and divisional levels "to resign honourably" for failing to express the movement's support for Anwar's expulsion and for being frequently in the former Deputy Prime Minister's house.

"They cannot force me to resign, I will not resign from the post," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said he would not step down as he was elected by the delegates and in line with the Umno constitution and regulations he could not be sacked from the post.

"If any among the committee members are not happy with my remaining as head of the movement, then they will have to wait for the party president to make a decision on my position," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said the call for his resignation "bore heavily on me."

Hishamuddin said Ahmad Zahid's decision was in line with the Umno constitution and party regulations.

He urged Umno Youth members to calmly face the present situation.

He also said the movement's members would explain to party grassroots

the expulsion of Anwar Ibrahim from Umno and his removal from the Cabinet.

Anwar, who was sacked as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and expelled from Umno last week over allegations of sexual misconduct had resolutely said he was innocent of the things he was being accused of.

He also claimed he was a victim of a conspiracy to remove him.

One of the committee members Zein Isma Ismail said he was confident that the issue would not divide the movement but rather it would emerge stronger to champion the party's struggle.

He said Umno Youth condemned the reform movement launched by Anwar and his supporters as this, according to him, would divide the community.

-- BERNAMA

AFY AAM