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Anwar-Reaction

MIXED REACTIONS FROM LEADERS OVER ANWAR'S SACKING

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 (Bernama) -- The removal of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from his posts as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister today drew mixed reactions from national leaders.

Former deputy prime minister Tun Ghafar Baba said he was saddened by the sacking because Anwar was his successor.

"I withdrew from contesting (the Umno deputy president's post) in 1993 because I wanted to give the young leaders a chance to take over," he said when contacted by phone.

Anwar, 51, was appointed deputy prime minister on Dec 1, 1993.

Ghafar advised the party members to be calm and to wait for further clarification from Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the matter.

"I believe Dr Mahathir has thought deeply before making the best decision. The party members should not be disunited because of one leader," he said.

He also expressed surprise over the sacking, saying that he too wanted to know the reason for the decision.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said he was shocked over the announcement of Anwar's removal.

Asked about Anwar's position in Umno, he said the party had not decided on the matter.

"The party post is different from the Cabinet post," said Sabbaruddin, who is Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister.

He said the Umno Supreme Council which would meet tomorrow would discuss "normal matters".

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said he was shocked by the announcement although rumours about the resignation had been going around lately.

Dr Lim, who is Primary Industries Minister, SAID it was Dr Mahathir's prerogative to appoint or remove ministers.

"I hope that this will end the rumours so that we can continue the fight to revive our economy," he said.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayob expressed his sadness over Anwar's sacking.

"I feel sad because this is happening at a time when the country is facing an economic slowdown," he said when contacted at his residence.

"It's a big loss as he is a potential leader," said Megat Junid, who is also an Umno supreme council member.

He said, however, that he was not surprised at the decision to remove Anwar because "I'm close to both of them (Dr Mahathir and Anwar)".

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the prime minister had the discretion to exercise his rights and make decisions.

"We must give our support to the prime minister to discharge the duties entrusted to him," he said.

Another supreme council member, Datuk Ibrahim Ali, said party members must realise that no one was indispensable or enjoyed any special position in the party to be above the law.

"The history of Umno has shown that every test can be overcome. This is not the first time a leader has been removed, there has been previous cases of leaders being sacked from their posts," he said.

Ibrahim was close with Anwar when they were both student leaders in the

1970s. Both were detained at the Kamunting detention centre under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for two years for their involvement in the Baling farmers demonstration.

Transport Minister and MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the party respected Dr Mahathir's decision.

"We back the decision because we have chosen him as the prime minister...he has the prerogative to do so," he said.

Dr Ling said there was no hint during the Cabinet meeting this morning that there would be any major announcement today.

Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar said he believed the prime minister had enough information to act against Anwar in the national interest.

He hoped that Umno members would support Dr Mahathir's action.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak called on the people and Umno members to be calm and to place national and party interests above all else.

"I believe that Dr Mahathir has studied the factors carefully before making a decision.

DAP Secretary General Lim Kit Siang said in a statement that the sacking had nullified whatever positive effects of the currency control measure announced yesterday.

He said it had also plunged Malaysia into an unprecedented political crisis which would make economic turnaround and recovery more distant and difficult.

Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Samad, who is also the state Umno liaison chairman, said Umno members must be rational and accept the decision.

"The state government accepts the decision and believes the people will do likewise. In such a situation, full support must be given to Dr Mahathir to ensure that he performs his duties well and without any obstructions," he said.

Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat hoped that Anwar's sacking would not add to the country's and people's problems.

He called on Muslims to pray so that this latest development would not further aggravate the economic slowdown.

In KANGAR Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim advised the people to be patient and to accept the decision.

Shahidan, who is also the state Umno liaison chairman, hoped the people and the Barisan Nasional component parties would stand solidly behind Dr Mahathir.

In PULAU PINANG state Umno liaison deputy chairman Datuk Mohamed Shariff Omar called on party members in the state to be calm and united and to continue giving Dr Mahathir their support.

Mohamed Shariff, who is Pulau Pinang Deputy Chief Minister, said the state Umno liaison body still held to its open declaration on Aug 11 to support Dr Mahathir's leadership.

In SHAH ALAM, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar said he would abide by the decision and urged the people of Selangor and Umno members to accept it calmly.

He said it was the prime minister's prerogative to appoint and sack cabinet ministers and Dr Mahathir must have strong reasons for his action.

-- BERNAMA