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More Umno leaders support expulsion

JOHOR BARU, Mon. - Johor Umno remains intact with no rift in the party's rank and file over Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's expulsion from the Cabinet and the party.

State party chief and Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said Umno leaders in the State understood the actions and were solidly behind party president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in the handling of the matter.

"Johor Umno leaders went to see the Prime Minister last Thursday and he personally explained why Anwar was removed from the Cabinet and party," he said after opening the Johor-Queensland Business Forum here today.

Ghani said Johor Umno was among the first to be given a direct briefing on the issue by Dr Mahathir.

He added the State Government was also stepping up checks to ensure mosques, surau and other Islamic centres were not being used by certain people to whip up anti-Government sentiments.

Ghani said Johor Umno was also keeping a close watch on certain elected representatives from the State who were Anwar's die-hard sympathisers and who appeared to be still supporting the former Deputy Prime Minister.

In Malacca, Umno supreme council member Datuk Tengku Mahmud Mansor said Anwar should focus on "cleansing himself" and not ask his supporters to form a reform movement.

It was unwise for Anwar to call on non-governmental organisations and the Opposition to be part of the movement.

He was asked to comment on the move by four Islamic groups - Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement, Jemaah Islah Malaysia, National Muslim Students Association of Malaysia and Malaysian Academy of Islamic Science, to seek justice for Anwar.

Tengku Mahmud added Anwar was given the chance to defend himself through legal means.

Expressing regret over Anwar's call for reform, he said Anwar, being a former national leader, must understand the importance of stability and unity.

"What he is doing now is like he wants to create chaos by making wild accusations," he said.

Malacca Umno chief Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin, who is also the Chief Minister, warned Umno members against attending or holding gatherings seeking favour and sympathy for Anwar.

He said Dr Mahathir had no choice but to sack Anwar to safeguard the Government and party.

"So far, the Government and Umno have never compromised on cases of misconduct, crime and others involving government officers and party members."

In Ipoh, Perak Umno Youth today declared its support for the Umno supreme council's decision to expel Anwar.

State Umno Youth chief Jamal Nasir Rasdi said the movement was aware of its responsibility and openly accepted all the decisions made in the interest of the party and the country.

"This could be a blessing in disguise. We must stay calm and stand united and not make rash actions which could threaten the party's stability," he said.

When asked whether Perak Youth wanted Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid

Hamidi to relinquish his post, Jamal Nasir said Ahmad Zahid would soon take a stand on the issue in the interest of the party and the people.

"I have spoken to him today and he has assured me that whatever stand he takes will be made in the interest of the movement's future generation.

"He has also said he will be calling a Youth executive council meeting soon to explain and clarify the matter," he said, adding that whatever decision Ahmad Zahid made must be respected.

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