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Resignation `will not adversely affect party'

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said he was confident that the resignation of Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi as Umno Youth head would not have an adverse effect on the movement or the party.

He said this was because in Umno, "leaders can come and go but the party's unity must always be protected".

Sabbaruddin said he was not surprised by Zahid's decision.

Commending Zahid on his decision, he said it was a positive thing for him to do in the circumstances.

He said it was only proper for Zahid to resign since the Umno Youth Exco members and almost all State leaders had collectively expressed their loss of confidence in his leadership. "Now that he has done the right thing, it is time for Umno Youth members to close ranks and build a stronger and united front in facing the current challenges and others to come."

Sabbaruddin said, however, he had not seen the two resignation letters written by Zahid as they were addressed directly to party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Asked whether Zahid's resignation would be discussed at the supreme council meeting scheduled for Oct 6, he said there was a possibility although there was no specific need for it.

He said when a leader applied to resign from his post, and had indicated that his decision was final, his wish would be respected.

"We only need to discuss about him if we want to expel him, but now that he has voluntarily resigned, there is no such need," he said, adding that the memorandum on Zahid sent by Umno Youth Exco might still be discussed at the coming meeting although it was not included in the agenda.

Commenting on Zahid's assertion that he was never involved in Anwar's reform movement, Sabbaruddin said: "If he says he was never involved, then we have to believe him unless we have clear evidence to say otherwise. After all he is a responsible leader and a Member of Parliament."

An Umno Youth Exco member, Abdul Aziz Sheikh Fadzir, urged all members to respect Zahid's decision and lend their full co-operation and support to Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein.

"Zahid had put aside his self-interest to protect the greater interest of Umno Youth and the party. His unselfishness should be lauded and emulated by all leaders to come," he added.

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