

14/10/1998

Sacked members have history of quick success in party

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The three Umno Youth members who were sacked for anti-party activities on Oct 6 and are now abroad campaigning for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim have a history of quick success in Umno.

They became members only in the late 80s and early 90s and were closely associated with Anwar.

They are the former Penang Youth chief Abdul Rahim Ghouse, 37, the former Umno Youth assistant secretary Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, 34, and Anwar's former political secretary in the Finance Ministry Mohamad Ezam Mohd Nor, 30.

The fourth Anwar associate who left the country just before his sacking as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister on Sept 2 is 44-year-old N.V. Raman, former director of Lion Corporation Bhd's International Business Division.

The whereabouts of Rahim, Saifuddin and Ezam are not known although as recently as Oct 8 they had purportedly issued Press statements from Jakarta, Manila and Bangkok, condemning Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for sacking Anwar and for his detention under the Internal Security Act.

Raman, on the other hand, is believed to have left for the United States where he worked for many years after leaving The Star newspaper in 1987.

Raman and several others were said to be responsible for shaping the paper's editorial policy that eventually led to its temporary suspension in that year.

Before The Star, Raman worked with the New Straits Times. While in the US he worked for Atlanta Constitution newspaper and cultivated the friendship of senior US government officials and politicians.

Rahim was the executive director of Abrar Group International Bhd but resigned on Sept 18, two days before Anwar was arrested under the ISA.

He was the Penang Umno Youth chief and national Umno Youth economic bureau chairman until he was expelled from the party for taking part in anti-Umno activities on Oct 6.

Rahim holds two masters degrees in chemistry and sociology and a PhD in sociology (all from the US).

He was the deputy dean for the International Islamic University Research Centre.

Rahim became active in Umno in the early 90s. A Sama Gagah Umno branch (Permatang Pauh division) member, he became divisional Youth leader in 1997.

He was appointed State Umno Youth chief by former Umno Youth chairman Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, replacing Azman Shah Omar Shah in March. He is now believed to be in Manila.

Saifuddin was born in Singapore and is a science graduate from Universiti Pertanian Malaysia. He had served as a training and welfare officer of the National Gerakbakti Foundation.

Crossing over in a blaze of publicity from Pas to Umno in 1989 together with former Pas vice-president Nakhai Ahmad, Saifuddin became an Exco member of the Pokok Sena Umno division in Kedah in 1993. He managed to retain the divisional Exco post until the day he was expelled.

Saifuddin was sworn in as political secretary to the then Minister in the Prime Minister's Department and Law Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar on Feb 23, 1994.

He resigned two years later, just before the 1996 Umno elections.

Saifuddin was also the chairman of Barisan Nasional's permanent secretariat which co-ordinated activities of the Youth movements of component parties.

Aggressive by nature, Saifuddin was among the eight unemployed graduates detained by police for demonstrating against the Government in Pasir Mas, Kelantan, on June 26, 1987.

The group calling themselves "Kelantan Unemployed Graduates' Action Front", demanded job opportunities and better treatment of graduates.

The rebel in him was unfurled again last year, when he led a group of demonstrators to disrupt the Second Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor conference at the Asia Hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

He and four others were subsequently charged in the magistrate's court and fined RM1,500 for rioting. At present, he is believed to be in Thailand.

Raman, whose full name is N. Vengeketa Raman, is said to be an "image-cum-media" consultant to Anwar.

It is widely believed that Raman resigned from his comfortable job with the Atlanta Constitution in the US and returned to Malaysia on Anwar's invitation.

He was made a director of Lion Corporation Bhd's IBD in 1996. However, he resigned about seven weeks ago.

Raman left the country just before Anwar's sacking from the Government. He is believed to be in the US.

He is a member of Yayasan Salam's board of trustees, a non-profit volunteer group established along the lines of the US Peace Corps and dedicated to strengthening the spirit of volunteerism.

Yayasan Salam was founded by Anwar.

Mohamad Ezam, an economics graduate from International Islamic University, was appointed political secretary to the Finance Minister in 1997.

He was the deputy chairman of the Petaling Jaya Selatan Umno division until he was expelled from the party for taking part in anti-Umno activities on Oct 6.

Mohamad Ezam left for Jakarta after Anwar was arrested and is reportedly now in Manila.

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