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Three Umno Youth exco members defy decision

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Three Umno Youth Exco members - Dr Abdul Rahim Ghouse, Saifuddin Nasution Ismail and Ruslan Kassim - today defied the movement's decision to reject any attempt to drag it into any external activity including the reform movement initiated by ex-Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The three, together with another well-known Anwar supporter, Umno Youth head Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, had committed themselves to supporting the decision made by Umno Youth at a special meeting yesterday.

All three were not only seen at Anwar's house since the morning, but they had also followed Anwar and his supporters for Friday prayers at the Kampung Baru Mosque where Anwar delivered his speech.

Today, the movement's deputy head Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein advised Zahid and the other three Exco members to stay away from Anwar's house and any other gathering by the reform movement.

"All four had agreed to the unanimous decision to support Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's decision to remove Anwar from all government posts and the Umno supreme council's decision to expel Anwar from the party.

"They have committed themselves to the decision, and as such should refrain from any action that can result in Umno Youth being perceived as being involved in the movement," he told reporters at his office today.

Hishammuddin said Zahid and other Exco members should not allow Umno Youth to be used by anyone, especially in an activity that was clearly against Umno and the Government.

The movement, he said, would monitor the situation but would leave it to the supreme council to decide on the action to be taken against those who had worked against the party.

He said although Umno Youth could urge the supreme council to review Zahid's position and that of the other three Exco members, it would not do so because no such decision was taken at yesterday's meeting.

On his stand with regard to Anwar's sacking from the Government and his expulsion from the party, Hishammuddin said:

"It was easy for me to support both moves as I was convinced that they were the right decision. This is because I am privy to information about Anwar and his friends which others might not have.

"My decision is not personal but based on my priorities - to safeguard the people, the country and the party and I will defend it until the end of my political career."

But he said there should now be enough information "out there" for the people to make an independent decision on the issue, like the contradictory statements made by Anwar lately.

Last Thursday, a day after he was sacked from the Government, Anwar had told a Press conference that he had, against the advice of his legal advisor, submitted to two DNA tests to determine the parents of a girl alleged in a book, 50 Dalil Mengapa Anwar Tidak Boleh Jadi Perdana Menteri, to be his illegitimate child.

The Inspector-General of Police, Tan Sri Rahim Noor, later refuted Anwar's claim, calling him an outrageous liar as only the natural parents of the girl had submitted to the test which proved that Anwar could not have been the father of the child.

Subsequent to that, at another Press conference at his house, Anwar

refused to give an outright answer to that, but instead chose to question why the police were still harping on the issue when it had been clearly determined that he was not the father of the child.

Asked if he would still defend his decision if Anwar was willing to swear his innocence on the Quran, Hishammuddin said he would only comment on that when it became a fact.

Asked what would his advice be to the others who did not have the information that he had, Hishammuddin said:

"Leave the matter to be decided through the right channel, be it the courts, the political system or turn back to God for His guidance."

The people, he said, should act rationally and in a mature manner so that the issue would not destabilise the country or the economy.

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