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Umno Youth hands in memo on Zahid

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Umno Youth today handed in a memorandum to the party expressing loss of confidence in the leadership of its chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

The memorandum, signed on Tuesday by 21 of the 25 Exco members, also called on the party to take disciplinary action against Zahid and three other Exco members for their role in the so-called reform movement led by sacked Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The three are assistant secretary Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, Negri Sembilan Youth chief Ruslan Kassim and Penang Youth chief Dr Rahim Ghouse.

The memorandum was also signed by six State Youth leaders who were not Exco members, namely Zahidi Zainul Abidin (Perlis), Mohd Mustafa Khalid (Pahang), Nazari Adzim (Malacca), Abdul Halim Said (Kedah), Jaya Kusuma Rusman (Selangor) and Hasni Mohamad (Johor).

It was handed in by deputy head Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein to Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, who said the matter would be discussed at the party's supreme council meeting on Oct 6.

Speaking after chairing a meeting of Barisan Nasional Youth leaders at Menara Dato' Onn, held immediately after an Umno Youth Exco special meeting, Hishammuddin said the Exco members no longer believed in Zahid's credibility in leading the movement.

"This decision was made following his refusal to step down and his arrest under the Internal Security Act."

On the BN Youth meeting attended by leaders of the component parties' Youth wings, Hishammuddin said a rally in support of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would be held soon.

"We expect some 100,000 youths to attend. This is to demonstrate that only a small number of youths are involved in the reform movement while the majority of them are solidly behind the Government."

He said that the rally would also mark the beginning of dialogues with the masses organised by the BN Youth to explain the issues surrounding Anwar's sacking.

Hishammuddin also warned outsiders against interfering in Malaysia's internal affairs while urging the authorities to take stern action against foreigners found participating in demonstrations and creating disturbances under the disguise of reformation.

"This reminder is also intended for the Australian Prime Minister (John Howard).

"We want others to know that we do not need foreign assistance to solve our internal problems ... our country is our responsibility."

Howard, when commenting on Anwar's expulsion, had expressed worries that Malaysia was heading towards authoritarianism.

Hishammuddin said Malaysians had to blame themselves for allowing outsiders, especially the foreign media, to take advantage of the situation.

"They will not have the chance to manipulate and distort the facts if we do not give them the opportunity like allowing ourselves to be their tools."

To a question whether the movement would take action against members involved in the reform movement, he said some of the ringleaders had already been identified.

On what Umno Youth planned to do to convince the people on matters

surrounding Anwar's expulsion, Hishammuddin said the Exco members had been assigned to the States to make sure members get the true picture.

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