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Zahid grateful for chance to give his side of story

BAGAN DATOH, Wed. - Former Umno Youth Chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said he was grateful to Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the supreme council for giving him the chance to explain his side of the story.

"I would like to thank the president and the supreme council for deciding not to expel me from the party and instead issuing me with a show-cause letter. This proves that Umno upholds justice.

"I have been given the chance to defend myself," he told reporters after a close-door briefing with about 1,000 people, including Umno members, Barisan Nasional component party members, community leaders and leaders of several non-governmental organisations.

"I have yet to receive the letter but will reply to it as soon as possible," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said he came to know of the supreme council's decision to issue him and 17 others with show-cause letters through the newspapers and immediately contacted the Umno headquarters to confirm his status.

On the briefing session today, Ahmad Zahid said this was his first effort to explain to grassroots members the country's political situation. He added that he believed some members were thinking of leaving Umno because of differences of opinion.

"I will be discussing with acting Umno Youth leader Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein the possibility of me holding briefing sessions with Umno Youth members.

"Since I do not have locus standi as I am no longer the Umno Youth leader, I am waiting for other Umno divisions to invite me to explain to the grassroots in their divisions," added Ahmad Zahid, who is Bagan Datoh Umno division chief.

Ahmad Zahid said it was important that Umno members were not divided and that they fought for the same cause.

"They must not allow outsiders to capitalise on the political developments to destroy unity within Umno and the BN," he added.

He also advised Umno members to abide by the laws and allow the cases against former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to take its course.

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