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Zahid steps down

Asiah Bujang

UMNO Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi announced his resignation as the movement's leader yesterday.

At a news conference in Kuala Lumpur, Zahid said the decision was final and it was not due to pressure from any parties, be it from the Umno Youth Executive Committee, state or divisional youth chiefs.

"My decision is for the interest of all ... particularly the movement," he said.

Zahid, who is also a Member of Parliament for Bagan Datoh, said he had submitted two letters to the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the first on September 29 and the second on October 1.

"This is my final sacrifice for the movement," he said.

At the brief news conference which took less than 10 minutes, he also related his experience when detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

Zahid said he was detained while attending his company's board meeting in Kota Kinabalu.

"I like to thank the police for treating me so well during the detention," he said, adding that the police had questioned him professionally without any form of verbal or physical abuse.

He had also told the police that he had never been involved and would not get involved in any reform movement and roadshows or riots.

He was freed from ISA detention two days ago since his arrest on September 21.

Zahid said he was detained because the police wanted to know if he had lead the movement in doing acts against the public interests.

However, he declined to elaborate further on his resignation as the movement's leader but would still continue to remain as an Umno member.

He also stated that he will go on a nationwide tour to explain the situation to the public.

"I hope my friends in the movement will forgive my actions or speeches during my leadership in which may have offended them," he said, urging Youth members to give full cooperation to Datuk Hishammudin Hussein who is now the acting head.

Hishammudin will also represent the movement at the Umno Supreme Council meeting on October 6.

On September 24, the Umno Youth Executive Committee handed over a memorandum to the Supreme Council declaring loss of confidence in Zahid's leadership.

Zahid was earlier associated with the former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who went on a nationwide roadshow promoting his "reform" movement following his dismissal from the Cabinet on September 2 and from the party a day later.

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