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Fauzi: I'm prepared to face action over remarks

KUANTAN, Sat. - Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman said he is prepared to face action from Umno over remarks he allegedly made at the opening of two Umno divisional meetings in Kelantan last week.

The Kuantan Umno divisional head said he met party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad a few days ago to tell his side of the story.

Fauzi thanked Kelantan Umno deputy liaison chief Datuk Annuar Musa who had said that the party's State management committee meeting on Thursday did not make any conclusion after listening to the speeches recorded on tape.

Fauzi added that since the matter had been raised with the party president, he would wait for the outcome.

He was speaking after attending the opening of SRJK (C) Kuang Hwa by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

Fauzi's remarks, made when he opened the Pasir Puteh and Tumpat divisional delegates meeting, were interpreted by some of those present as expressing support for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the former Umno deputy president.

"The gist of my speeches was that it was not something despicable to acknowledge Anwar as a friend, but what is most important was to maintain loyalty to the leadership as this would save the party," he said.

Fauzi said his loyalty to Umno and its leaders should not be questioned, especially by those who had similar track record.

"I have been in the Kuantan Umno leadership line-up since 1973 when I was only 26 years old.

"Every time the party faces a major crisis, I have always supported the party and defended the party president," he said.

These included during the deregistration of Umno which led to the formation of Parti Melayu Semangat 46 and the constitutional crisis.

"I have never shown my back to Umno and I work with the leaders to solve the crisis," he said.

Fauzi said when he delivered the speeches at both venues, none of the delegates walked out of the meeting halls.

"I find it strange as the matter came to head only a week after the meetings," Fauzi said, adding that he did not want to speculate if there was an ulterior motive in it.

In Kuala Lumpur, Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said he had not listened to the tape.

"I have read about it in the newspapers but I have yet to receive a copy of the tape.

"So, I cannot comment on the incident.

"But for the two Umno divisions in Kelantan to bring the matter up to the Prime Minister, there must be something wrong in his speech," said Sabbaruddin.

"Probably there were some questionable statements ... otherwise there is no need for them to submit the tape to the party president," he added.

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