

Don't forget KJ in Round 3, PM urged
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Puteri Aida Haryani and Zulaikha Zulkifli

Several Umno Youth leaders have come forward to urge prime minister Najib Abdul Razak to consider appointing their leader onto the cabinet.

NONETHis is because overlooking Khairy Jamaluddin (right) can erode the youths' support for the Barisan Nasional, said Sabah Umno Youth chief Azman Ruslan.

"The youth wing chief must be given recognition," said Azman when contacted.

Najib broke BN's longstanding tradition to appoint the Umno Youth chief, who is the de facto BN Youth chief, to a cabinet position.

Instead, Najib appointed Khairy's deputy Razali Ibrahim and Mukhriz Mahathir, who hold no elected central party post, as deputy ministers.

Azman said he was disappointed with the omission of Khairy from the cabinet, which currently consists of five senators as full ministers and 11 senators as deputy ministers, despite the large pool of MPs to draw from.

No recognition

Likewise, Selangor Umno Youth Chief Suhaimi Mohd felt that Najib's decision on Tuesday sent a message about the youth wing's role in the party.

"What Najib (appears to be saying) to society is that we (Umno Youth) are willing to work for the party," he said when contacted today.

He, however, added that the youth wing has no choice but to accept Najib's decision as he has the final say.

Perak Umno Youth Chief Ali Zainal Abidin also expressed displeasure over Najib's "odd" decision, saying that it is as if "they do not appreciate the youth wing".

Zainal said that Khairy should at least be appointed as a deputy minister as having him sidelined will demoralize Umno Youth members.

This, he said, will have a detrimental effect on the BN machinery in the next general election.

"It will be hard for us to attract youngsters to support BN because even the youth leader himself cannot get a position," he said.

Not all agree

However, most state Umno Youth chiefs when contacted, did not share Azman's sentiments about Khairy.

Kelantan Umno Youth chief Anuar Safian said he respected Najib's decision, but hopes the premier will consider a full cabinet minister from the youth wing in the next reshuffle.

"We hope that in the future, (the premier) will show faith in the youth wing," he said.

Penang Umno Youth chief Norman Zahalan said it was "not a big problem" for Khairy to be overlooked because the youth wing's priority is the party.

His Kedah counterpart Badrul Hisham Hashim concurred and said he fully endorsed Najib's new lineup.

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