

'Missing' Zahid irks members at Jelutong Umno AGM
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About 60 Umno members from Jelutong were bitterly annoyed at state liaison committee chairperson Ahmad Zahid Hamidi for his failure to open the division's annual general meeting (AGM) last night.

NONEUmno vice-president Ahmad Zahid (right) and Senator Ezam Mohd Nor were reportedly invited to grace the event but both were nowhere in sight at the Hotel Grand Continental, where the meeting was held.

Division chairperson Abdul Wahab Abdullah solemnly announced at a press conference held mid-way during the event that the duo's absence resulted in members feeling "abandoned by the party's leadership".

"We feel disappointed and sad. Something is not right here. We are confused. Prime Minister and Umno president Najib Abdul Razak has been going around the country asking the party to increase its members, and here we ignore and dismiss over 4,000 members in Jelutong," he said.

"This is why we have invited Ahmad Zahid to meet us here to resolve the problem of the 17 branches (which were supposedly dissolved recently) but it looks like this will not happen even after three years (since the problem begun)" he added.

"We have followed proper procedures. If our branches are really closed, where is the official notification?" he asked.

Abdul Wahab (left), who is Pantai Jelutong branch chief, said the process of closure must be transparent; and a state leader should not be the one announcing the matter in the media.

He maintained that members have yet to be duly informed of the closures by the party's supreme council or the Registrar of Societies, which he claimed were the only two rightful parties regarding the closure of any branches.

"This is not right as there are traitors who are doing bad things there (in the state leadership) and who are trying to undermine our existence due to an internal political struggle for positions within the division," he stressed.

"There is a conspiracy happening within Umno in Jelutong. The party is still in a state of turmoil, and the crisis is yet to be resolved," he lamented.

Courtesy lacking

His deputy, Syed Hussein Syed Mohamed, was more forthright in expressing his regret that the national leader was not only absent, but also did not have the courtesy to notify members beforehand.

The Taman P. Ramlee branch chief issued an ultimatum, stating that 4,500 members of the controversial branches will not hesitate to jump ship if they were still left dangling.

"These are members who are also voters in the Jelutong area whose votes can regain the seats lost to Pakatan Rakyat in 2008, namely the Sungai Pinang and Dato Keramat seats," he said.

"If they (party leaders) do not clarify this issue for us by this year, we will join other parties (opposition) in our area. Don't wait too long, because it may be too late for us to change our minds," warned Syed Hussein (left).

Earlier, Abdul Wahab clarified that the branches, which boast of members who had been with the party for 20 years, were still active and the meeting was organised based on provisions in the branches' constitution.

Undeterred by the awkward turn of events, the AGM, which begun at 8pm, was finally opened by former Jelutong division chief Abdul Rashid Ismail (left).

Earlier, state information chief Azhar Ibrahim had repeatedly told reporters that the branches have been dissolved and the decision endorsed by the supreme council which had given him the mandate to act on the matter.

Azhar, who is state opposition leader, also said that members of the closed branches would be 'absorbed' into the remaining 25 branches.

Previously, Jelutong had 42 branches, where 17 were suspended in 2008 due to problems in their membership lists.

But the leaders of the 17 branches refused to accept their fate and ignored a division meeting held last week.

It saw attendance by members of the approved branches, who appointed Abdul Razak Mohd Sultan as head.

"What do they mean by 'absorbed'? We were not even invited to attend that division meeting and we do not want to disturb them," quipped Taman Perak branch leader Mahadzir Mohd Mustafa, when met before the event.

"The meeting may not be legal as it may not have a quorum because it did not include members of our 17 branches," he added.

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