

Umno Youth : no action against Mukhriz
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Umno Youth today decided to pass the buck back to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi by not taking action against its errant leader, Mukhriz Mahathir. MCPX

Following the Umno Youth executive council meeting, the movement's chief Hishammuddin Hussein said no action would be taken against Mukhriz for writing a scathing letter to Abdullah demanding that he should resign in the wake of the party's setback in the March 8 polls.

gerakan youth agm 2007 051007 hishammuddin talk "We have decided not to take action against him," said Hishammuddin (right).

According to Hishammuddin, the Umno Youth has accepted the controversial letter as a personal missive which was unfortunately leaked to the public.

"Of course, it's damaging (to the party) because it (the letter) was made public. The way it was brought up to the public doesn't help at all."

Nevertheless he said Umno Youth would not take action against those who leaked the letter to a number of Internet websites.

Hishammuddin also said that the letter was Mukhriz's personal view and this did not reflect the opinion of Umno Youth which had expressed full support for Abdullah's leadership.

"There are so many other more important issues faced by Umno Youth. The main challenge is now the opposition, not Mukhriz," he told a press conference at the end of a meeting over the issue.

"We need our party to be strong," said Hishammuddin.

He said that Mukhriz told the closed-door meeting that his views were those of the public and there was nothing wrong with expressing his views.

"If we don't change and we still remain in a denial mode there is a possibility that we will become irrelevant," Hishammuddin said, referring to calls within the party for reform after the election debacle.

Last week, Abdullah, who is also Umno president, said he would leave it to Umno Youth and Hishammuddin to deal with the matter.

Accept responsibility

mukhriz mahathir In his March 12 letter, Mukhriz, who is son of former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, had urged Abdullah to accept responsibility for Barisan Nasional's disastrous performance in the general elections.

Met after the meeting, a defiant Mukhriz, who won the Jerlun parliamentary seat, said he stood by his letter and would not retract it.

"I think the message is very clear. We want to become a party which is more relevant and accepted by the people."

Mukhriz said he was relieved by the decision and was ready to help reform the government.

"I am happy that there is room in Umno Youth to voice issues which are not agreed upon (by the others)," said Mukhriz, who is a top member of the movement's supreme council.

Mukhriz also said he had received many SMSes where "99 percent of which supported his action".

"I have made my stand clearly before this and I have not changed my mind," he said.

Khairy: Not disappointed

Meanwhile, Umno Youth deputy chief Khairy Jamaluddin said this was not first time an Umno leader had called for the party president to resign.

khairy jamaluddinIn another development, Khairy said he was not disappointed for being left out from the new cabinet line-up.

He added that he had told Abdullah before nomination day "not to be pressured" by speculations that he would be appointed as a cabinet member.

"I do not have any aspirations to become a minister as long as Abdullah is prime minister," he told reporters.

Prior to the March 8 polls, it was speculated that the 32-year-old politician might be given a cabinet post.

Khairy, who won the Rembau parliamentary seat, said he would concentrate on playing a role in checking the opposition since it now holds one-third of the seats in Parliament.

"Actually I'm interested in debating, not governing. My focus now is on the opposition. There is nothing wrong with being a backbencher. In fact, you should be proud of it." he said.