

More heads roll in backlash to money politics

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Mohd Sohor and Abas Kasim.

The Umno disciplinary board dropped more bombshells last week when it announced the names of several more Umno division and branch leaders, who have been sanctioned for alleged money politics in the recent divisional elections.

The seemingly inconsistent punishment meted out also raised some questions among the affected leaders.

Eight lost their rights to vote, stand for election or be appointed to any post at branch and division levels for between three to six years while three others, including Pokok Sena division head Ahmad Lebai Sudin, were let off with a warning.

Among those stripped off their positions was Bukit Bintang division head Datuk Abdul Azim Mohd Zabidi, who is also a supreme council member and Bank Simpanan Nasional chairman.

Although board chairman Tenrku Ahmad Rithaudeen "said Azim can keep his supreme council seat since he was elected to the post in party elections last year and not during the divisional elections, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, however, said the party would have to study the matter before making a decision on Azim's position as supreme council member.

Others stripped off their posts were Pasir Puteh Umno division head Kamaruddin Mohd Nor and Kuantan vice-head Datuk Faisal Abdullah.

Faisal has been suspended from holding any posts for six years beginning May 26, together with two other members from the same division Mohd Zahar

Berita Harian reported that Kuantan Umno head Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman was shocked that his allegations of money politics in the division had implicated his own deputy, Faisal.

Faisal had received the highest number of votes during the election.

Meanwhile, Faisal who is also the state Barisan Nasional working secretary said he accepted the decision of the board.

He also suggested that the party come up with a guideline on penalties imposed on errant members to avoid inconsistencies.

For instance, he said, one who was guilty of 14 offences was meted the same punishment as Mohd Zahar and Abas, who both committed one and two offenses respectively.

Politics aside, also in the news was the cramped and overcrowded condition of Kuala Lumpur Hospital.

A hospital source told *Utusan Malaysia* that the present admittance rate of 38 to 60 new patients a day was taking a toll on the hospital.

The situation was worse at the 3rd Class wards and there were times when patients had to be placed on canvas beds along the corridors.

The situation turned critical at the end of last year when three wards were closed and normal wards built to accommodate 32 beds were fitted with 50-54 beds while the number of doctors and nurses remained the same.

Following the report, Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Suleiman Mohamed visited the hospital and ordered HKL to reopen the three wards which has been used as storerooms for hospital equipment.