

31/05/2001

Appointment not against constitution

Hizreen Kamal

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The appointment of Datuk Raja Ariffin Raja Sulaiman as Umno Baling division chief is not against the party constitution.

Umno Deputy President Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said this was because Datuk Zainol Md Isa, who had won the post, had been disqualified after being found guilty of breaching party rules by the Umno disciplinary board.

"The winner of the division head contest was disqualified. Therefore the question of him holding the post does not arise.

"In a contest for the division's head post, when one is found guilty, (his opponent) will replace him," he told reporters after chairing the Umno Management and Disciplinary Committee meeting at the party headquarters today.

Abdullah, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, said this when asked to comment on the protest by 114 Umno branch chiefs in the division against the appointment of Raja Ariffin.

The Baling division has 152 branches.

The group also felt that Raja Ariffin's appointment was against the party constitution which had stipulated that in such a situation, the division's vice-head would be the one leading the division.

According to Section 15.7 of the Umno constitution, should a division head be unable to carry out the duties due to being suspended, old-age or had passed away, the post should be taken up by the vice-head.

Abdullah said perhaps the group thought that when a division had no leader, the vice-head would be the one to replace him.

Raja Ariffin took over the position after Zainol was found guilty of breaching party rules.

On May 21, the supreme council endorsed the disciplinary board's decision to remove Zainol for resorting to money politics during the recent division elections and appointed Raja Ariffin as the division chief instead.

Abdullah also advised members of the Baling Umno division to accept Raja Ariffin as their leader as it was a decision made by the Supreme Council.

"Do abide by the decision made. If people continue to oppose every decision made by the Supreme Council, then nothing can be resolved," he said.

He said Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had already explained that if any division head was found guilty, his opponent would replace him.