

09/06/2001

Baling Umno leaders seek new chief's removal

BALING, Fri. - Several Baling Umno branch leaders, dissatisfied with the explanations offered by party leaders on the appointment of Datuk Raja Ariffin Raja Sulaiman as their division chief, are now seeking his removal.

The group has signed a memorandum demanding that Article 15.7 of the Umno constitution be upheld. The article states that in the event a division chief is removed, his deputy should replace him.

In the case of the Baling division, former division chief Zainol Md Isa was removed from the post after he was found guilty of indulging in money politics.

The Umno supreme council then decided to appoint Raja Ariffin, who had lost to Zainol in the April divisional elections, as the new division chief.

This is the second memorandum the group is sending. The first, signed by 114 branch chairmen last month and addressed to party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, had also stated their opposition to Raja Ariffin.

In a written statement handed out to the Press today, the group said they wanted Raja Ariffin to resign and that this would solve all problems in the division.

Led by Kampung Bok Bak branch chairman Hashim Jusoh, the branch chiefs said the group would not accept Raja Ariffin's appointment as it had contravened Umno's constitution.

Speaking at a special meeting at a division committee member's house here today, he said the division could not accept a leader it had already rejected in earlier divisional elections.

Hashim also said the group wanted the supreme council to explain why they chose to follow election commission regulations rather than provisions in the party constitution when they appointed Raja Ariffin.

"We want an explanation and we want a dialogue with the leaders on this matter," he said at the meeting attended by 60 branch chiefs and nine committee members.

Hashim also denied that the group had taken the action in support of former chief Zainol.

"Zainol has been found guilty by the Umno disciplinary board and we fully accept that decision.

"We are not troublemakers, dissenters or Zainol's men, we just want the supreme council to honour the party constitution," he said.

Hashim also said the matter could not be resolved by Zainol as suggested by Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain.

He said it was a party problem and it should be settled by the party.

Problems in the division began after Raja Ariffin's appointment as division chief, replacing Zainol.

Apart from the 114 branch chiefs' letter of protest to the party president, nine office bearers of the Baling division were also absent from its first meeting with Raja Ariffin.

(END)