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Council's endorsement most apt

A. Kadir Jasin

THE Umno supreme council did itself and the party proud on Monday by endorsing the findings of its disciplinary board against members who were involved in money politics.

The board two weeks ago found six divisional Umno leaders guilty of money politics in the just ended divisional elections and declared their victories invalid.

Three of them - Datuk Abdullah Omar, Datuk Zainol Mat Isa and Mustafa Kamal Mohd Nawi - had won the post of divisional chief for Muar, Baling and Gopeng respectively.

Aside of endorsing the board's findings and the punishments imposed on the six offenders, the supreme council appointed the defeated candidates to take over as division heads.

The incumbent, Abdul Malik Munip, who lost to Abdullah, was made the Muar chief and challengers Datuk Raja Ariffin and Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Samsuddin were given Baling and Gopeng respectively. The supreme council's decision is laudable. But it should expect to hear some grouses from supporters of the ousted winners.

The supreme council had little or no choice. Had it taken a less stern stand, its entire credibility and the credibility of the party would be put to question.

With Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself in the chair, a lesser decision by the supreme council would have been totally unacceptable. It would even be an affront to the President who has been crusading against money politics for some years now. Here, the media is deserving of recognition. Days before the supreme council sat, the Press, in particular the Malay newspapers, had warned the party that unless it stood firm against the offenders, it would lose the trust of members and the people as a whole.

Since then, those members who threatened to leave the party if their victorious candidates were disqualified had not done so. Even Abdullah, who was reported as saying that he would leave the party if his charity work was misconstrued as money politics, had publicly stated that he would stay. Zainol, who is the Bayu State Assemblyman and State executive councillor succumbed to public pressure and tendered his resignation from the State Cabinet.

Zainol's contention that he was not guilty of money politics but instead of using the 4B Youth movement in the divisional election is debatable. To the general public, the term "money politics" include using one's position in a mass organisation or a public limited company to influence the outcome of a party contest.