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Mahathir-Umno

STATE UMNO CHAIRMEN TO HANDLE PROBLEMATIC DIVISIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 3 (Bernama) -- State Umno liaison committee chairmen will now manage the affairs of Umno divisions whose chiefs were found guilty and suspended by the party's disciplinary board for unethical practices in divisional elections early this year.

The Prime Minister and party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this meant that the party has nullified its earlier decision to appoint those defeated in the elections as division chiefs.

"We have to nullify the earlier decision of appointing the losers to head the affected divisions following appeals by the suspended chiefs. We do not know the status yet," Dr Mahathir told a news conference after chairing a meeting of the Umno Supreme Council here today.

Pending decision on the appeals, liaison committee chairman the state Umno involved would manage the affairs of the affected divisions, he said.

At today's meeting the council decided to hear the appeals by those found guilty and penalised by the disciplinary board, Dr Mahathir said.

The board had suspended five division chiefs namely Datuk Abdul Azim Mohamed Zabidi (Bukit Bintang), Datuk Kamaruddin Mohamed Nor (Pasir Puteh), Mustafa Kamal Mohamed Nawi (Gopeng), Datuk Zainol Mohamed Isa (Baling) and Datuk Abdullah Omar (Muar).

As for the earlier case involving the Gopeng, Baling and Muar divisions the board in turn appointed those defeated in the contest to head the divisions.

On Azim's position as supreme council member, Dr Mahathir said: "There is nothing we can do, we cannot decide whether he is guilty or not, he is still a supreme council member."

Azim, he said, could still appeal against the board's decision and in the meantime the Bukit Bintang division would be managed by the Federal Territory Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the party had set up an independent secretariat to consider appeals from members found guilty by the disciplinary board.

The secretariat is headed by lawyer and former senator Datuk Zuki Kamaluddin.

"Upon hearing the appeals, the secretariat will make recommendations to the supreme council since the council is the appeals board," Abdullah said.

However the secretariat had not referred any case to the council as it was still considering several cases and the number of appeals was expected to increase further, Abdullah added.

-- BERNAMA

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