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Supreme council should back decision, says Dr M

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KANGAR, Mon. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Umno supreme council, scheduled to meet on Saturday, should endorse the party disciplinary board's decision to suspend six members found guilty of involvement in money politics.

The party president said the endorsement was important to reflect Umno's commitment to wipe out money politics.

"The meeting should support the decision taken by the disciplinary board ... if (the decisions) are rejected, nobody would want to get themselves involved in fighting corruption (within the party) in future," he said at a meeting with Perlis Umno State and grassroots leaders at Dewan Residensi.

Dr Mahathir said he personally did not want corrupt people to be in the party as their presence would tarnish Umno's integrity.

He said people were already looking at Umno negatively because some of its members and leaders were corrupt.

"The supreme council will receive a report from the disciplinary board and I will give my views (on the report) together with the council members.

"My opinion is that we should support the board," he said, adding that the party would not lose anything if it did not get the support from such people.

The disciplinary board found six leaders, including three division chiefs guilty of indulging in money politics and barred them from standing for elections and holding party posts for six years.

The six are Gopeng division chief Mustafa Kamal Mohd Nawi, Bagan Serai candidate for deputy chief Zaki Din, Baling division chief and Kedah State Exco member Datuk Zainol Md Isa, Gopeng information chief Mohamad Annuar Baharuddin, Selayang information chief Rahmat Abdullah and Muar division chief and KFC Holdings Malaysia Berhad executive chairman Datuk Abdullah Omar.

Dr Mahathir said although there would be appeals the decisions of the disciplinary board would be considered final.

"We must clean up the party as we don't want people to be disgusted with us because our leaders are chosen in a corrupt manner."

Dr Mahathir said there might be people who could accept corrupt leaders but there would be those who would desert Umno if the party continued to keep them.

"Don't be angry if I am a little strict this time. I have done all sorts of things ... appealing, crying on stage but to no avail.

"I am trained as a medical doctor to heal those who are sick and sometimes this requires using radical means," he said citing an example of a diabetic patient with gangrene in the foot where there is no other option but amputation.

Admitting that some of those involved in money politics had escaped investigations by the disciplinary board because of lack of evidence and the reluctance by members to report because the offenders are their friends, Dr Mahathir said they should not think they could get away with it.

"Since not all who indulged in money politics could be punished, people may think it is unfair ... but if there is evidence we will take action," he added.

He said he would not sideline leaders who did good work for the party.

"I have no right to reject them, as you see even those who once opposed me are now holding party posts," citing Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, Foreign Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar and Kangar division chief Datuk Radzi Sheikh Ahmad.

Dr Mahathir also urged winners and losers in the just concluded divisional elections to close ranks to strengthen the party.

Speaking to reporters after a dialogue with representatives of the National Students Consultative Council at Universiti Utara Malaysia, in Sintok, near Alor Star, later, Dr Mahathir said he was only giving his opinion when calling on the supreme council to endorse the disciplinary board's decision.

"That is my opinion. In the supreme council, it is not always that my views prevails, if they don't agree with me, then don't agree," he said when asked to elaborate on the matter.

Dr Mahathir said although the supreme council would hear the appeals of those concerned, it had to consider rationally the role of the board.

"We have appointed a special body to investigate and we have to give rational consideration to its decisions or else no one will ever want to be a member of such a committee," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Umno had to be serious in its action against money politics now or no one would ever take the party seriously.

He said some people may be saddened and may even hate the party because of this drastic action.

"The question is, if we don't do this, we will lose support. If we do this, we will also lose support of the people who are not loyal to the party and who think only of themselves.

"We are doing this for the good of the party," he added.

Asked whether Zainol, who is the only one among six found guilty of holding a government post, should relinquish his State Exco post, Dr Mahathir said the party would consider the matter.