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Zainol clings to posts (HL)

Zubaidah Abu Bakar

ALOR STAR, Tues. - Datuk Zainol Md Isa, who has been removed as Baling Umno division chief for practising money politics, said today he was not prepared to relinquish his post as State executive councillor or resign as Bayu assemblyman.

This is in spite of the unanimous decision by the Umno supreme council yesterday to endorse the party's disciplinary board findings against him and five others for practising money politics during last month's party elections.

Zainol, 52, who is in his fifth term as an assemblyman, said he would appeal to the disciplinary board.

In a statement released here, Zainol said he would discuss his position in the Government with Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain, who is also the State Umno liaison committee chairman.

"I will also be attending the State Exco meeting tomorrow ... and do not see the need to resign as Bayu assemblyman," he said.

The exco meeting to be chaired by Syed Razak has been scheduled at 10am at Wisma Darul Aman here.

The Umno supreme council meeting chaired by party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday endorsed the decision of the disciplinary board to suspend six divisional leaders, including Zainol, for practising money politics.

The other five were Gopeng division chief Mustafa Kamal Mohd Nawi, the division's information chief Mohd Annuar Baharuddin, Bagan Serai division deputy head Zaki Din, Selayang division information chief Rahmat Abdullah and Muar division chief, KFC Holdings deputy executive chairman Datuk Abdullah Omar.

The council also decided there would be no re-elections and posts won by the offenders would be awarded to the defeated candidates - thus allowing former division chief Datuk Raja Ariffin Raja Sulaiman to return to power in Baling.

Zainol, who was the division's deputy chief, defeated Raja Ariffin with a 107 majority after polling 262 votes against Raja Ariffin's 155.

In the statement, Zainol said he would file an appeal to the disciplinary board to clear his name and urged his supporters to remain calm.

"As a party member, I accept the supreme council's decision to endorse the decision by the disciplinary board and support measures taken by Dr Mahathir to curb money politics," he said.

Maintaining his innocence, Zainol insisted the case against him has no link to money politics as it involved a 4B Youth Movement programme.

Zainol, who is also president of the State 4B Youth Movement, said he only chaired the Baling 4B Youth Movement meeting at a hotel in Sungai Petani to discuss activities for a "Belia Tani" programme.

Zainol served as the State Assembly Speaker in 1995 and has been a State Executive Councillor since 1998.

He is currently State Agriculture and Rural Development Committee chairman and the most senior Kedah exco member.

Zainol became an Umno member in 1970, joining the Kampung Padang branch and rose through the ranks to become Baling division chief in 1987.

However, in 1988, he gave up his position as division chief and was deputy chief of the division until recent party divisional elections.

Meanwhile, Raja Ariffin said he did not foresee any problem leading the Baling division because he still enjoys support from members.

However, he said he needed an official letter stating he is now the division's chief to enable him to carry out his party duties.

"I am prepared to take the responsibility as, after all, I was the division leader," he said.