

WHY U.M.N.O. RULES WERE AMENDED

Need to keep out the undesirables

1985 SEP 13

IT is the fear that people with evil intentions could infiltrate the party that has spurred Umno to amend its constitution with regard to membership.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said undesirables could become members if recruitment was not strictly controlled.

The amendments, therefore, were basically aimed at protecting party interests.

Divisional committee

Dr Mahathir explained that the party could not possibly ascertain the motives of people applying for membership and could, thus, unwittingly open itself to those with ulterior motives.

He said there was a difference between activities at branch

and divisional levels because of specific constitutional requirements.

Anyone could be elected to lead Umno branches as there was no restriction on the number of branches that could be set up. The party constitution, however, restricted the setting up of divisions to one for each electoral constituency.

Explaining the amendment relating to membership to delegates attending the special Umno assembly, he said: "If we do not control and supervise the entry of people into the party, we may (even) find branches supporting the opposition."

Under the amendments to the constitution, all applications to become members will be considered by the divisional committee within a period of 60 days.

The Supreme Council is empowered to approve such ap-

plications if the divisional committee fails to carry out its responsibilities.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on fears expressed by a delegate that the move to tighten membership procedures would estrange members from their branches.

The delegate had felt that the amendment could adversely affect the relationship between members and their branches.

Grassroot support

"The branch no longer has power to recruit members and has become only a 'post office,'" he claimed.

He feared that the amendment would lead to a weakening of the grassroot support of Umno leaders which had been the basis for the party.

Dr Mahathir cited a recent oc-

currence where certain branch leaders were prepared to destroy the party to further their own interests.

It was, therefore, necessary for a permanent body like the Umno division or Umno headquarters to vet those applying for membership.

The Prime Minister cautioned delegates that strict control over membership was necessary to avoid what had happened to the administration of certain Government-built mosques.

He said they had fallen under the control of anti-Government elements as the imams in charge had been influenced by people with ulterior motives.

"It has also become difficult for the Government to regain control over these mosques," he said.