

# Delegates want 'unhealthy Call for shorter

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Delegates to the Umno general assembly today criticised some of the methods used in the campaigning for party posts and called on president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to put a stop to the unhealthy practices.

Some alleged that the use of money, gifts and offers of rewards had tainted the campaigning in the run-up to this year's election and felt this could hurt the party's image.

One way to overcome this, they said, was to shorten the campaign period to one month instead of the seven months like this year so that Umno members would not be seen as year-round political campaigners.

Dr Mahathir told a Press conference later that he would reply to the points raised in his winding up speech tomorrow.

He said he was aware that the delegates had touched on the alleged use of money.

He said: "I will reserve my reply to tomorrow. If I tell you now, then there's nothing to say tomorrow. I'm a politician, so you must time it (the reply) very precisely."

He described the debate so far as "less exciting" because the emphasis was on the election. "Not many specific issues were raised as was the case in previous assemblies."

Asked whether the delegates were critical of the party leadership, Dr Mahathir said that this time they were not over-critical.

He said he observed they were satisfied with the leadership and generally supported the actions and policies of the Government.

"Next year, they will be talking about other things

because this year the most important issue was the election," he added.

Asked about a proposal by delegates that efforts should be made to woo former deputy president Abdul Ghafar Baba into the mainstream of Umno, Dr Mahathir said this was a normal issue in the party.

"We always want reconciliation between the newly-elected leaders and leaders of the past. We don't want the party to split."

Asked whether he would initiate a reconciliation move, he said the matter would be resolved in time and that it must be natural.

"It must come from the heart, so to speak," he said.

Asked to comment on a delegate's opinion that he had stepped in too late in the pre-election campaign, he said it was quite difficult to do so.

"It (the opinion) is just hindsight. In this matter, I believe that whatever I had done, there was always an alternative to it. Even if I had stepped in too early, it would be raised during the debate."

Asked when would be the appropriate time to bring about a transition in the Government, he said: "I don't know. Maybe sometime after this (the general assembly). I won't say when. I'm quite free and I don't have a time frame."

"I'm quite comfortable with the present situation."

Thirteen delegates from various divisions spoke today — the second day of the general assembly — as they debated the motion of thanks for the presidential address.

After the election of new office-bearers, the assembly lacked the anticipated excitement but this was made up by speakers who livened up proceedings with their wit and humour.

Some delegates took the

cue from Dr Mahathir who also paid tribute to Ghafar, the former Deputy Prime Minister, for his services to the party and Government.

But most speakers drew the assembly's attention to the alleged use of money, gifts and rewards to woo delegates in the run-up to the election. Some called on the newly-elected leaders to initiate moves to close

ranks and strengthen the party at the grassroots level.

This was essential to meet future challenges, which included the next general election.

Yesterday, five delegates addressed the assembly. Ibrahim Ali from Pasir Mas spoke twice. Yesterday, he had to stop his presentation because permanent chair-

practices' stopped  
campaigns

man Tan Sri Sulaiman Ninam Shah had to announce the results of the election of the supreme council.

So far, 17 delegates have addressed the assembly after the resolution on the presidential address was moved by Hamdi Abu Bakar from the Bruas division in Perak.

The delegates were obvi-

ously more relaxed today. Congratulatory handshakes and words of sympathy continued to be seen and heard as winners and losers resumed their party work.

The resolution on the presidential address is expected to be passed tomorrow. The only other resolution, on education, is expected to be tabled tomorrow by the Selangor Umno.