

Polls: Umno to have second 'dry run'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Umno will hold a second "dry run" soon to tighten its election machinery as part of its preparations for the coming general election, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Speaking at a Press conference after a two-hour meeting of the party's supreme council, the Umno president said supreme council members would be required to visit the various divisions to check the party's preparations for the

election.

"We discussed the election but no date has been fixed. But we agreed to have a second dry run. This is the usual 'dry run' which we normally hold.

"The first 'dry run' looked like we were well prepared but there were divisions which had not arranged their election machinery. The second 'dry run' is to arrange the election machinery.

"We are waiting for the revised electoral rolls and all these will be taken into account."

The Prime Minister said the supreme council also decided to computerise all data pertaining to the elec-

tion compiled by the divisions, besides the voters' register.

He also announced the appointment of vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, the Selangor Menteri Besar, as chairman of the party's computerisation committee. Other members are vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yasin (Johor Menteri Besar) and supreme council members Datuk Annuar Musa and Harun Has-san.

Dr Mahathir said he would brief all the party's information committees, including its Youth and Wanita wings, next week on various aspects of the party machinery pertaining to the

election.

Asked whether the supreme council discussed the extra 4,500 names that appeared in the Kelantan Election Commission list, Dr Mahathir said the supreme council had discussed it.

He added that the names could affect the party's chances in the coming elections.

(The discovery by the Election Commission of an extra 4,500 names in the Kelantan Election Commission office forced the Election Commission to postpone the gazetting of the revised electoral rolls to Feb 9 instead of Jan 30).

Dr Mahathir said: "It appears we are going to lose

about 4,000 voters. As far as we know they are Umno people."

"If Umno people cannot vote then it will definitely affect Umno's performance.... In an election, even one vote can determine who wins."

Dr Mahathir said he was not blaming the Election Commission for the missing names but the system used to register and transfer voters appeared to be not right.

Last Wednesday, Dr Mahathir said the procedures governing the registration of voters needed to be reviewed to ensure fairness.

He said the present proce-

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dures require that a person who intends to register as a voter does so personally. But he said it was rather peculiar that it allows others to transfer the person's name to other constituencies.

Dr Mahathir added that the procedures must therefore be studied so that they could be amended.

Asked to elaborate on the party's computerisation plans, Dr Mahathir added that it would take time as a

lot of data had to be entered.

However, he urged reporters not to jump to conclusions that because of the computerisation process, the Government would hold elections after Hari Raya.

He said that the supreme

council would obtain the revised electoral rolls for 1994 to help it determine the suitable candidates for the election. The rolls would provide contesting parties an indication of the racial composition in a particular constituency.

Responding to another question on whether the party had drawn up a list of potential candidates for the election, Dr Mahathir added that everyone was a potential candidate but "whether you get or not is another thing".

Dr Mahathir also said that the post of Deputy Rural Development Minister left vacant following the death of Yasin Kamari recently would not be filled.

Instead, he said another Parliamentary Secretary had been appointed to undertake the Deputy Minister's responsibilities.

He was asked to comment on the appointment of Pasir Mas MP Datuk Ibrahim Ali as the Ministry's Parliamentary Secretary yesterday. The other Parliamentary Secretary is Datuk Mohamad Jamrah.

Yasin died last Dec 27.

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on a report that the European Union planned to impose new conditions under its Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) on countries including Malaysia.

It was reported that beneficiary countries have been asked to improve the quality of their development through more advanced social and environmental policies.

He said Malaysia must accept that one day, the country would no longer be given the GSP privileges.

"But we want to know what are the conditions and basis (for the withdrawal).

"Once we have known that, we will have to decide whether to adapt ourselves or make preparations on the possibility of the GSP being withdrawn," Dr Mahathir.

Elaborating, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said Malaysia had always objected to the inclusion of non-trade matters such as the environment and workers' rights as conditions for the GSP.

She said the country, together with other beneficiaries, would oppose any move to use other clauses in deciding GSP conditions.

"But we must be prepared for whatever conditions are imposed in future. We must take out the GSP element from our competitive edge and make our goods competitive even without the GSP.

"In the meantime, we still have time to lobby and make our presentations to the EU on the matter with other beneficiary countries ... we have already started that," said the Wanita Umno chief.

Asked if Malaysia was prepared to trade without the GSP privileges, she said there were several industries which were prepared for this eventuality.

However, she added that there were also industries which were not yet ready, especially industries that have not made any headway into the European market.