

Review likely to take some time, says Dr M

By Jeffrey Ramayah and Tengku Sariffuddin

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the party's *ad hoc* committee was expected to take some time to complete the review of its constitution and election regulations.

He said it was better for the Committee on the Review and Amendment of the Constitution to conduct a thorough study so that the party need not carry out such an exercise time and again.

"I am not sure, probably many suggestions have been forwarded and therefore we need to take some time. The *ad hoc* committee will conduct an indepth and comprehensive study."

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after attending the Deepavali open house hosted by Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

Dr Mahathir, who is chairman of the committee, was asked whether it would complete its study and forward recommendations at next month's Umno general assembly.

The supreme council at its meeting on Oct 6 decided to form the committee as it was concerned about allegations of wrongdoings during the party elections at various levels.

The committee has been given the power to draw new regulations pertaining to the election process or take measures deemed necessary to curb unhealthy practices.

The 11-member committee will hold its first meeting at the Umno headquarters tomorrow. Other members of the committee are deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, and supreme council members Tun Daim Zainuddin, Abdul Ghani Othman, Datuk Saleh Tun Said and Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman.

Four party veterans in the committee are Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin Mohamed Yassin, Tan Sri Aishah Abdul Ghani, Tan Sri Samad Idris and Tan Sri Azahari Taib.

Asked to comment on the proposal by supreme council member Datuk Annuar Musa that the election for party posts be held once in five years instead of three, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the members to decide.

He said the members could forward their proposals for consideration by the committee.

"I cannot give my views. I am bound by the views of members.

"If members want something, they can support the proposals. Now we have the *ad hoc* committee to review this matter and we can study any proposal."

On the call by Parti Melayu Semangat '46 deputy president Datuk Dr Rais Yatim to set up a Malay council, Dr Mahathir said the party had raised the is-

P Mahathir Mohamad

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Dr M: People have decided

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sue during the general election.

He said if the people felt it was a good proposal, they would have supported *Semangat 46*.

"My view is that in a democratic country they (*Semangat 46*) have the right to make this an issue.

"If the *rakyat* agreed with them, they would have won the election," the Prime Minister said.

Yesterday, Rais said a Malay council made up of Malay-dominated political parties, academicians, businessmen and other Malay interest groups should be set up to safeguard the interests of the community.

Dr Mahathir also said he did not have any comments

over an article in the *Asiaweek* magazine which focused on the country's top leadership, maintaining that a magazine had to be controversial in order to sell.

The Prime Minister said he had made his statement "over and over again" and wondered what else could he say.

He was speaking to reporters on arrival at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Subang after attending the 11th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and an official visit to Peru.

The article, *Power Play*, among others, said the loss of a "Mahathir loyalist" in the Umno divisional election had sparked rumours

that he was losing his grip on Umno and might soon have to relinquish control to his deputy.

Dr Mahathir said: "They want to sell the magazine, and this is a right that we have to respect. To sell a magazine you have to be controversial."

At this juncture, Anwar, who was with the Prime Minister, quipped: "But just don't sell us."

The Prime Minister further said: "We are just wares for sale."

When asked that even local reporters were saying there were Prime Minister's men and Anwar's men, Dr Mahathir said: "My supporters are here," pointing towards Anwar and broke into laughter.