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Mahathir-members

UMNO TO INTRODUCE LIFE MEMBERSHIP

KUALA LUMPUR, March 5 (Bernama) -- The Umno Supreme Council today decided to introduce life membership to avoid the problem of collection and payment of annual subscriptions among its members.

Its president, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said the party would hold a special general assembly next year to amend the Umno constitution to enable the implementation of life membership together with several other amendments aimed at overcoming the existing weaknesses.

"We have not decided on the amount to be paid but what is clear is that to have the life membership we have to amend the constitution," he told reporters after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the Putra World trade centre, here.

He said the special general assembly could not be held this year because of time constraint as Umno had several agenda lined up like its 50th anniversary celebrations and the party elections in October this year.

He said the ad hoc committee set up to study the overall Umno constitution also needed time to scrutinise this and other matters before the amendment proposals could be tabled.

Dr Mahathir said the introduction of life membership meant that members need only pay their membership fees once.

This could resolve the problem of members not paying their subscriptions which could put Umno in trouble if such members got directly involved, including voting, in the branch and divisional meetings and the general assembly, he said.

"There are many who do not pay their subscriptions. Sometimes they want to pay but (the branches and divisions) do not accept and so forth," he said when asked for the number of Umno members who have not paid their membership dues to the extent that Umno had to introduce life membership.

He said the question of membership fee payment was also often used as a tool by certain parties to eliminate members who were their foes.

However, he said, life membership did not mean that a member could not be suspended or expelled if he breached party discipline.

Dr Mahathir said that pending the amendment to the party constitution Umno would ensure that the collection of membership subscriptions proceeded smoothly.

He said any member facing problems in paying his subscription at branch and divisional levels could make the payment at the party headquarters.

At the same time, action would be taken against any branch or divisional leader who refused to accept members subscriptions for no reason.

He also said that the ad hoc committee set up to study the party constitution would hold its second meeting soon. -- Bernama

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