

08/10/1998

Nod for changes to Umno constitution (HL)

Hayati Hayatudin

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Umno supreme council has approved two major changes to the party constitution, including abolishing the 10 bonus-vote system and lowering the age of eligibility for membership from 18 to 16.

The two proposals were among amendments to 17 clauses and sub-clauses of the party's constitution approved by the council at its monthly meeting chaired by its president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last night.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said all amendments would have to be passed by the next general assembly and subsequently by the Registrar of Societies.

It was also proposed that a new clause be introduced, making it compulsory for a member to serve the party for a specific number of years before becoming eligible to contest party positions at any level.

It was also proposed that the five top leaders in each Umno division automatically qualify as delegates to the general assemblies.

Sabbaruddin said the proposed amendments were to curb money politics, as well as to ensure the credibility and seriousness of candidates.

"With the abolition of the 10 bonus-vote system, a new condition where candidates vying for posts in the council must have a certain number of divisional supporters before being eligible to contest," Sabbaruddin told reporters at his office.

The 10 bonus-vote system was introduced in 1987 to curb money politics. It gives the president and deputy president 10 bonus votes for each nomination received from divisions.

Sabbaruddin said the council felt that a member should be in Umno for a specific number of years so that his capabilities as a leader could be assessed.

He, however, did not specify the number of years.

"The age of eligibility for a person to become an Umno member is to be reduced from 18 to 16 so that aspiring leaders will be exposed to politics and the party at an early age," he said.

Umno has 2.4 million members and 165 divisions in Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah.

Explaining the reasons for the amendments which would allow the five top divisional leaders to automatically qualify as delegates, Sabbaruddin said there were complaints from the Wanita movement that they were under-represented.

The five who will automatically qualify as delegates are the division head, deputy head, vice-head, youth chief and wanita chief. Currently, the party constitution allows 10 divisional members to be elected as delegates.

Only the divisional chief automatically qualifies as delegate. Delegates to the general assemblies are elected at the annual divisional meetings.

In Shah Alam, Selangor Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Abu Hassan Omar said the allegation by council member Datuk Seri Mohamed Rahmat that some divisions had received millions of ringgit from former Deputy President Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the council had ordered that the matter be dropped to enable the party to focus on tackling other important issues.

Anwar was sacked as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister on Sept 2 and expelled from Umno the following day.

(END)

