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#### Umno adopts amendments to strengthen solidarity

Fadzil Ghazali; Hamisah Hamid; Asiah Bujang

THE Umno extraordinary general assembly yesterday adopted the 15-point amendments to the party's Constitution, aimed at putting the movement on stronger footing and greater solidarity.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said at the end of the assembly the amendments are also aimed at avoiding money politics and at the same time stressed on a stronger Umno culture to prevent mismanagement.

Some 1,900 delegates attended the assembly to decide on the amendments.

The motion to amend the constitution was tabled by Education Minister and Umno vice president Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, and supported by Acting Umno Youth Head Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein who is also the Deputy Primary Industries Minister.

The highlight of the amendments is the abolishment of the 10-point bonus votes system. Under the system, each division's nomination gives a candidate vying for the president or the deputy president's post 10 points bonus votes in the Umno general election.

The bonus system has now been scrapped, following the amendments. In its place the party now requires that a candidate must secure at least 30 per cent support from its 165 divisions to contest for the post of party president. The requirement is 20 per cent for deputy president and 15 per cent for the three vice president posts.

Winding up the motion later, Foreign Minister and vice president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said amendments passed by delegates attending the one-day assembly proved that democracy in Umno is alive and healthy.

"Members' faith in the party's Supreme Council will only enhance Umno's unity and strength. These amendments will further improve Umno as a political party in the country," he added.

Abdullah also acknowledged the importance of members' support to the movement, and he called on them to put the party's interests above their own.

He noted that the speed these amendments were approved shows the delegates' faith in the Supreme Council, and with the amendments, the party can continue its struggle.

"We must realise that what is important is the party's unity and strength. It is unity and strength that will ensure Umno to be in good health. The party's health must be the order of the day."

Other amendments to the Constitution are on membership's applications and status, conditions to contest or holding posts in the movements, and disciplinary actions.

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