

# Umno to amend constitution on polls

SUN 31. 10. 2008

Elections proposed to be held within 12 months of a general election

**KUALA LUMPUR, Mon:** The Umno Supreme Council has agreed to proposals to amend the party constitution providing for the council's elections to be held once every four or five years according to the term of the parliament.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it also agreed that the elections will be held within 12 months of a general election.

"Our intention is to create a distance between general election and supreme council members elections. However, most probably, it (the term) will not go on until six years.

"All delegates to the annual general assembly will be qualified to vote for the council elections, as is the practice now," he said after chairing a supreme council meeting today.

Mahathir said the council also decided that the elections will continue to be held during the annual general assembly and not at division level as was suggested by some.

This is because elections at the division level will create problems, especially logistics, since it must be held simultaneously to avoid one division influencing another.

"If it is not done at the same time, other divisions will know of the candidates chosen and it will influence their opinion.

"Even if it is done simultaneously, we would also face problems as sometimes, division meetings are deemed not valid and need to be held again," he said.

The council also feels that elections at division level are not a guarantee that money politics will not take place, he added.

"After a very lengthy discussion, the council members have agreed that it is better for the election to be held during the annual general assembly as it will influence nomination.

"Some said if it is done at division level, we only need to register the names of those who wish to contest. If this is done, probably many will

come forward to register and this can be used to reduce votes for the serious candidates," he said.

Mahathir said the percentage of nominations required to qualify for supreme council elections will remain, which is 30% for president, 20% for deputy president, 10% for vice-president and 5% for members.

The annual general assembly and division meetings will be held every four or five years while branch meetings will be held every

two years, he said.

The party will also set up a disciplinary board to replace the disciplinary and management committee, with its members appointed by the council.

Mahathir said the board will not comprise members of the supreme council or those with certain political interests such as those aiming for a supreme council seat.

Similar to the present disciplinary committee, he said, the board will forward its decision to the supreme council to be finalised.

"There are some who claimed that it (disciplinary committee) favours certain people. Therefore, we want it to be open and transparent."

Mahathir said members of parliament and state assemblymen must remain in the division committee at least as an ex-officio even if they have lost or did not contest for the seat.

"They must not be left out from direct involvement with the division management, as they have a specific role to play, in order not to create differences of opinions."

The council also decided that life members must pay RM100 and that all Malays and bumiputras can register as Umno members except for Opposition members, those bankrupt or with criminal records.

Mahathir said all the proposals for the amendments to the party constitution will be distributed to the divisions for them to make suggestions to be debated during the Nov 18 special general assembly.