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2,023 at special assembly

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Tomorrow, a total 2,023 Umno delegates will gather at Dewan Merdeka of the Putra World Trade Centre to debate on several proposals to amend the party constitution at its special general assembly.

The one-day assembly is described by many in Umno as significant in the democratic process of the party in the wake of an emergence of a new breed of Malays and Malaysians.

It is being held during a time when the party is picking up the pieces of a very battered image during the last general election.

Almost immediately after the general election and the party general assembly, Umno carried out a post-mortem and decided that there was a need to repair that image.

At tomorrow's assembly, delegates are likely to unanimously pass amendments to the party constitution and endorse the resolutions on them with an aim to rejuvenate and enable the party to be more relevant to the Malays.

One proposal, which turned out to be controversial was dropped. The party supreme council yesterday decided not to table its proposal to extend its tenure in office from three to five years.

After much criticism and responding to protests, the supreme council decided to retain the existing provision.

This new development was seen by many as the willingness of the leadership to practise democracy in its true spirit.

A popular proposal which is expected to be accepted and endorsed without much debate is to have all levels of the party structure - branch, division and supreme council to have their elections in the same year instead of staggered sessions currently practised.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will deliver his keynote address at 9.10am.

This will be followed by the tabling of the proposed amendments by party vice-president and chairman of the committee studying the amendments Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

The debate immediately follows. Deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will wind up the motion.

State representatives will be given up to 15 minutes to speak. There will be two speakers from each State and representatives from the Youth and Wanita movement.

Among the speakers are Mastika Junaidah Hussin and Abu Bakar Ismail (Perlis), Datuk Badaruddin Amiruldin and Abdul Wahab Din (Kedah), Datuk Ahmad Rastom Ahmad Maher and Mohd Apandi Ali (Kelantan), Datuk Abdul Rashid Ngah and Datuk Paduka Abdul Rahman Bakar (Terengganu) and Datuk Abdul Latif Mirasa and Datuk Abdul Rashid Ismail (Penang).

Others are Datuk Ramly Zahari and Datuk Husni Hanadzlah (Perak), Ismail Sabri Yaakob and Rosni Zahari (Pahang), Datuk Mohd Satim Diman and Mufti Shuib (Selangor).

Muhyiddin said today he expected the focus to be dominated by the proposals which touch on service and personnel-related matters.

"I think this would be the focus - the length in the term of service and so on," said Muhyiddin.

He was asked about any misgivings which might arise from the various suggestions which did not result in proposals due to the large number received.

"Sometimes we have to consider the implications to the party, on Umno's image, all this was taken into consideration."

Asked on the five-year term of service which the supreme council yesterday dropped, Muhyiddin said the suggestion was the sole council proposal which received positive feedback from the State Umno.

"I was asked to inquire from the States whether they would be agreeable if the proposal was tabled."

However, Muhyiddin said that due to the reservations which arose later, the council decided to drop it.

"So I do not agree with anyone who might say that these proposals were made by three or four people."

He hoped the delegates would accept the proposals.

"In fact, we hope that it's unanimous, and these efforts to strengthen Umno should be supported by the delegates."

(END)