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Move to curb politicking

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - If a proposal discussed today is adopted during Umno's Nov 18 extraordinary general assembly, the election of supreme council members will be held once in every five years instead of three at present.

The proposal will ensure that the election for top party posts be held after every general election.

This was one of several proposals discussed during the council's meeting today as measures to curb excessive politicking.

The council would further refine the proposals which would be submitted to an extraordinary general assembly for adoption into the party's constitution.

"We discussed the proposals overall but decided today only to discuss them and to give our views. No decision has yet been made," party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

He was speaking to reporters after chairing the council meeting at party headquarters here.

Dr Mahathir, who is Prime Minister, also announced that the extraordinary general assembly would be held on November 18.

He said another supreme council meeting will be held at least 14 days before the extraordinary assembly which would then decide which proposal would be pursued.

The Umno president said a two-week notice needs to be served before the assembly is convened.

Dr Mahathir was asked on the proposals relating to amendments to the party constitution which was discussed at the meeting today.

"There are suggestions that the election of the supreme council be done at branch level and not at general assemblies as being practised now."

On another matter which was discussed, Dr Mahathir said it was very important for the party to increase its membership, especially among the younger generation.

Dr Mahathir said during the meeting, the party president and council was reminded that they should appreciate the role of the Wanita Umno in the party's struggle and activities.

Later asked whether there were any resentments expressed during the meeting which led to the reminder, Dr Mahathir replied:

"There are some who appear in the newspapers and said that we call Wanita Umno members makcik ... we admit we shouldn't come up with such remarks.

"Maybe they misinterpret it into thinking that they are no longer of use. But in fact we appreciate the role of women."

Dr Mahathir said the actual problem was that the party was not able to attract more younger members, a problem which was not restricted to Wanita Umno but also the Umno Youth, which has also been directed to attract more members.

"In fact, there is a suggestion among the amendments to the constitution that we should admit members as young as 16 years old, not 18, the minimum age allowed at present."

On whether the council had made a decision on the establishment of Puteri Umno, Dr Mahathir said: "The establishment of Puteri Umno will be done, but we don't know its shape yet."

On the maximum age for members, Dr Mahathir said no decision had yet

been made. He said some suggested it be under 40, while others preferred 35, 30 and 25 years.

"We will decide this when we have our next meeting," said Dr Mahathir.

Asked whether the proposed Puteri Umno would complement Wanita Umno, Dr Mahathir said they should.

Dr Mahathir said he also explained to the council the outcome of his recent visit to the United Kingdom.

He said the two demonstrations which occurred during his visit, in Cambridge and Manchester, but they were held by foreigners and not Malaysians.

The first, he said, were done by Pakistanis, while the second was by the "whites" representing the Amnesty International group.

Dr Mahathir was also asked on the reported power struggle between several parties including Tan Sri Sanusi Junid and Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar for the presidency of the Malaysian Association of Youth Clubs (MAYC).

Dr Mahathir replied: "I am of the opinion that it would be better if this youth movement be led by youths.

"Now, it looks as if it is being led by old people ...not so nice. I think it should be led by people under 40. Let's go back to youth leading youths."

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