

30 OCT 2000

Mahathir-Umno

UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL "YES" TO AMENDMENT ON PARTY POLLS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Umno Supreme Council (MT) has agreed to the proposal to amend the party constitution providing for MT elections to be held according to the term of the Dewan Rakyat.

Dr Mahathir who is Umno President said the MT also proposed that party polls be held within 12 months from the date of the General Election.

Today's meeting also agreed that the MT election be held during the party General Assembly and not at divisional and branch levels as proposed by the Constitution Amendment Committee.

Today's meeting also gave the nod to the proposal to maintain the nomination quota system for persons wishing to contest top party posts, he said after chairing the MT meeting at the party headquarters here.

Dr Mahathir said all the proposals approved by the MT today would be brought to the Umno General Assembly on Nov 18 for debate.

Elaborating on the MT elections, Dr Mahathir said, "Only one election to the MT during the Parliament's term. If the Parliament's term is four years, we must hold MT elections once in four years, if five years, once in five years." Parliament's term is five years.

Dr Mahathir said the proposal was aimed at setting a distance between the general election and the MT election.

Asked whether it was an effort to hold on to power, the Prime Minister said, "'To hold on to power in... Parliament it is also for five years. It does not matter."

He said all party members who were delegates to the Umno General Assembly had the right to elect Umno Supreme Council members as was the current practice.

He said today's meeting also felt that the proposal to hold MT elections at divisional level would give rise to logistic problems and would not guarantee that there would be no money politics.

"Probably there are people who are so rich that they can get workers from all over Malaysia to ensure that they are nominated. This is something that is likely to happen. That is why we felt that MT elections at divisional level would not guarantee that there will not be money politics," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the logistic problems could occur as divisional elections would have to be held simultaneously to choose MT members and any which was found invalid would have to be held once more.

"Hence the decision of other divisions can influence the division which holds its meeting once more," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the MT felt it would be better if the present rules were maintained, that is if the candidate wishing to contest is nominated at divisional level and the total number of nominations be taken into account like at present.

Under the Umno Constitution, to qualify as a candidate for the post of party president, a person must get at least 30 per cent of the nominations from the divisions, 20 per cent in the case of deputy president's post, vice president (10 per cent) and MT seat (five per cent).

He said the MT also agreed that divisional elections be held only once during Parliament's term while branch elections be held once in two years.

On the formation of Puteri Umno, Dr Mahathir said it would be an entity by itself and it would not have the status of a club.

He said the head of Puteri Umno would automatically be a member of the Umno Supreme Council and would have no vice president status as was proposed.

He said the structure of Puteri Umno including the age limit would be

decided later.

The MT also accepted the proposal that the party president be empowered to appoint 12 MT members compared to 10 at present with the additional appointments coming from Umno Youth and Wanita Umno.

Touching on another proposal, Dr Mahathir said Umno members of the Dewan Rakyat and State Assembly should be in their respective divisional committees.

"If they contest and win in divisional polls, surely they will be in the divisional committee. If they contest and lose, they can become ex-officio members in the divisional committee. If they do not contest they will have the right to be ordinary members in the divisional committee," he said.

This is because elected representatives cannot be completely cut off from the divisional management, they can be ex-officio members without voting rights.

This rule if approved would be effective after next year's divisional elections.

Dr Mahathir also said a Disciplinary Board was expected to replace the present Umno Disciplinary and Management Committee and would comprise non-MT members who had no vested interest in the party.

He also said branches had no right to reject applications for membership of Umno from Malays or Bumiputeras.

However the MT had the right to reject such applications if the applicant was still a member of the opposition, a bankrupt or had criminal record, he said.

-- BERNAMA

MAM RZS AAM