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Umno committee to submit report

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Umno management committee is expected to submit a report at the party's supreme council meeting tomorrow on the proposal to dissolve all its existing 165 divisional committees and replace them with pro-tem office-bearers until the party elections next year.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said today that Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is committee chairman, would table the report based on discussions during its meetings.

"There could be a great possibility that the matter is discussed, but it all depends on the party president (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad).

"However, Abdullah will table the proposals concluded by the management committee during our previous meeting."

Muhyiddin said there was a need to form the pro-tem committees as soon as possible to enable the divisions to prepare for the next general election.

"Parliament has approved the re-delineation exercise carried out by the Election Commission and thus the path is open for political parties to form new divisions," said Muhyiddin, who is also Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister, after chairing the Ministry's post-Cabinet meeting.

Another vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said the proposal had to be discussed in detail as it involved a lot of matters.

"We must also listen to the views of all supreme council members and especially the State liaison committee heads."

A party source said there were two proposals to be considered - to dissolve the existing 165 divisional committees and form new ones or to only form pro-tem committees in the 25 new divisions.

He said if the proposal was accepted, the supreme council was also expected to make a decision on whether to retain the Umno Youth and Puteri Umno leaders who had exceeded the age limit to hold the posts or replace them.

"We must consider it is only a year before the next party elections and perhaps it is a wise move to retain these leaders as the general election is just around the corner.

"These leaders have surely carried out preparations to face the Opposition and we fear that any changes might jeopardise the strategies for the general election."

Abdullah, who is also Umno deputy president, said recently that views of all 165 divisional committees had to be obtained before a decision was made whether they should be dissolved and replaced by pro-tem committees.

He said the supreme council must first agree to the proposal before it could seek the views of the divisions. The proposal, if accepted, also affects Youth, Wanita and Puteri movements in the divisions.

On June 24, the Dewan Rakyat passed the Federal Constitution (Amendment) Bill followed by the Dewan Negara on July 3 which would see the creation of 25 new parliamentary seats.