

No guarantee Dr M will address assembly

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KUALALUMPUR: Should former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad be elected by Kubang Pasu Umno as its delegate to the Umno general assembly, there is no guarantee he will address the largest political gathering in the country that will convene in November.

According to party's practices, the state liaison committee will assign delegates identified by the divisions to speak on the resolutions which normally cover religion, economy and education, as well as the president's speech.

There's another layer.

All the resolutions and the names of those from the respective states who will table the motions will be submitted to the resolution committee headed by vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin,

The list will later be presented to the party's supreme council for further amendments and final decision.

Mahathir had said in Alor Star on Wednesday he had accepted nominations to contest as a delegate at

the division meeting on Sept 2.

He expressed hope that he would be given the opportunity to speak at the assembly should he be elected as a delegate.

He refused to disclose what he would say at the assembly should he be allowed to speak.

Mahathir had said he was surprised why he was prohibited from meeting and addressing Umno members when he loved Umno and was loyal to the party.

Asked to comment on this matter, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohd Nazri Aziz said it was up to Mahathir to offer himself as a delegate but that it was up to the division to decide if they wanted him to represent them.

He said whether Mahathir would be picked to speak at the general assembly was in the hands of the state Umno.

"I have no problems with it. If you are speaking about forum, Umno is the right forum for him to air his

views," he said when replying to questions from reporters.

Kubang Pasu division chief Datuk Johari Baharum said it is the right of Mahathir to offer himself as a delegate,

"It is up to the division delegates to decide if they want him," he said.

He refused to be drawn into speculation on whether the former premier would be picked as a delegate.

Johari, who is also the deputy internal security minister, said the move by Mahathir was a first for a former prime minister and party leader

"This is the first in the history of Umno. No one in the party who had retired had offered himself for any post in the past," he said.

Mahathir headed the Kubang Pasu division until he stepped down in 2003. Johari is a former aide of his.

Johari said the division will pick seven delegates on top of the four others who are picked automatically, namely division chairman, and heads of the Wanita, Pemuda and Puteri wings.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad and Information chief Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd Taib could not be reached for comments.