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Dr M: I'll be at the assembly

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said he would accept an invitation from Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and would attend the party's general assembly next week.

However, he was quick to say: "They don't need to send me the letter, I will come."

Ahmad Zahid had earlier said he hoped Mahathir would attend the AGM as he was still well respected.

Mahathir said he expected this year's AGM to be "less fun".

"This year's assembly will be less open. The assembly has always been fun, but I don't think this year's will be as much," he said.

Asked if he would be given a chance to speak at the assembly, he said: "I don't think so ... I am only a guest."

Earlier, Mahathir had criticised the decisions by the Umno Youth, Wanita and Puteri wings to have their respective leaders officiate at their assemblies instead of the party's deputy president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

"We are moving away from party tradition," said Mahathir. "The speaker should ensure Muhyiddin is given a chance to speak as he is still the party's number two."

"Even though we had issues in the past, no one was ever prevented from talking, even people who contested against me," he said.