

KUALA LUMPUR, OCT. 17 (BERNAMA) -- UMNO HAS SELECTED TERENGGANU MENTERIBESAR DATUK AHAR HAJI WAN MOKHTAR AHMAD TO TAKE PART IN THE, PROPOSED UMNO-PAS DEBATE ON NOV. 11.

ANNOUNCING THIS TODAY, UMNO PRESIDENT DATUK SERIDR MAHATHIR MOHAMADSAID HOWEVER THAT HE HADNOT YET DECIDED ON THE OTHER TWO SPEAKERS WHO WOULD REPRESENT THE PARTY IN THE DEBATE TO BE TELECAST LIVE OVER TELEVISION MALAYSIA.

+WE(UMNO) ARE ALL SET FOR THE DEBATE BUT THE OTHER SPEAKERS TO BE FIELDLED HAVE YET TOBEDECIDED,+ THE PRIME MINISTER TOLDBERNAMA AFTER CHAIRING THE WEEKLY CABINET MEETING AT HIS OFFICE HERE.

POLITICAL SOURCES SAID DATUK AMAR WAN MOKHTAR, WHO IS UMNO'S RELIGIOUS BUREAU CHAIRMAN, WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE OF HIS WIDE KNOWLEDGE OF ISLAM AND BECAUSE HE COMMANDED RESPECT AMONGNOT ONLY UMNO LEADER6 BUT ALSO THE PA8 CIRCLE.

ALTHOUGH BATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR DECLINED TO COMMENT, IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT BATUK WAN MOKHTAR WILL BE UMNO'S MAIN SPEAKER IN THE DEBATE WHICH WILL BE HELD AT 4 P.M. AT ONE OF THE STUDIOS IN ANGKASAPURI.

AN UMNO POLITICAL LEADER SAID THAT IF PA8 BOASTED OF A RELIGIOUS BAGE IN ITS VICE-PRESIDENT HAJI HADI AWANG, UMNO COULD BOAST OF SOMEONE WITH MORE CALIBRE AND A +FITTING MATCH+ IN DATUK AMAR WAN MOKHTAR WHO WAS JUST AS WELL-VERSED IN ISLAMIC ISSUES.

+INFAC, I CAN SAFELY SAY THAT BATUK AMAR WAN MOKHTAR WITH HIS COOL AND MODEST DELIVERY WILL BE ABLE TO DRIVE HOME THE POINT DURING THE DEBATE BETTER THAN HAJI HADI, WHO IS KNOWN TO BE A FIERY SPEAKER ONLY WHEN GIVING SERMONS TO HIS SUPPORTERS BUT CANNOT FACE A NATION-WIDE AUDIENCE,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR REFUSED TO BE DRAWN INTO DISCLOSING THE IDENTITIES OF THE OTHER TWO SPEAKERS WHO HAVE BEEN WIDELY SPECULATED TO BE UMNO YOUTH LEADER ENCIK ANWAR IBRAHIM AND DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT DR YUSOFF NOOR.

MEANWHILE, SOURCES CLOSE TO PAS SAID THE PARTY'S REPRESENTATIVES IN THE DEBATE WOULD MOST LIKELY BE THE HEAD OF ITS DEWAN ULAMAK (COUNCIL OF ELDERS), HAJY NYK AZIZ NIK MAT, ANB PAS DEPUTY PRESIDENT HAJI FADZIL NOR.

THE GUESSING GAME OF WHO WILL REPRESENT THE TWO SIDES WILL GO ON AS IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT EITHER PARTY WILL WANT TO DIVULGE THE NAMES OF ITS REPRESENTATIVES BEFORE SUBMITTING THEM TO THE INFORMATION MINISTRY.

UMNO SECRETARY-GENERAL BATUK SERI SANUSI JUNID, IN ANNOUNCING THE TOPIC AND THE DATE OF THE DEBATE TWO DAYS AGO, HAD SAID BOTH UMNO ANB PAS WAD TO SUBMIT THE NAME6 OF THEIR SPEAKERS BY OCT. 31 TO THE INFORMATION MINISTRY'S SECRETARY-GENERAL WHO HAD BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH HANDLING THE PREPARATIONS.

BATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT AS HE HAS BEEN AWAY FROM THE COUNTRY FOR NEARLY THREE WEEKS, HE HAD NOT YET DISCUSSED DETAILS OF THE DEBATE, INCLUDING THE CHOICE OF CHAIRMAN, THE AIR-TIME ALLOTTED AND WHETHER ANY CONDITION WOULD BE IMPOSED.

+BUT ONE THING I WANT TO MAKE CLEAR HERE ... NO SUPPORTERS FROM EITHER PARTY WILL BE ALLOWED AS THE DEBATE WILL BE HELD IN THE STUDIO,+ HE SAID IN RESPONSE TO PAS' SUGGESTION THAT UMNO AND PAS BE ALLOWED TO BRING 50 SUPPORTERS AND THAT QUESTIONS BE OPENED TO THE FLOOR.

SEVERAL NAMES HAVE BEEN PROPOSED AS THE CHAIRMAN, INCLUDING DEWAN RAKYAT SPEAKER DATUK ZAHIR ISMAIL, PROF AHMAD IBRAHIM OF THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY AND ROYAL PROF FUNGU AZIZ.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID: +ALL THE DETAILS, INCLUDING THE CHOICE OF THE CHAIRMAN AND THE AIR-TIME ALLOTTED WILL BE DEALT WITH LATER. THIS IS DATUK SERI SANUSI'S JOB. -- MORE

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MAHATHIR-DEBATE KUALA LUMPUR

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE DID NOT KNOW ABOUT PAS' DECISION TO SEND FOUR NEGOTIATORS TO TALK WITH UMNO ON THE DETAILS OF THE DEBATE.

*I DO NOT HAVE THE TIME TO DEVOTE TO ONLY ONE SUBJECT (THE DEBATE). THAT IS NOT THE ONLY BIG PROBLEM TO WARRANT MY ATTENTION.+

THE TOPIC OF THE DEBATE WILL BE +PAS ACCUSES UMNO MEMBERS OF BEING INFIDELS AND THOSE WHO OPPOSE UMNO WILL DIE AS MARTYRS.+

ASKED WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN A SLIGHT CHANGE IN THE TOPIC SUGGESTED BY HIM, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR REPLIED: +I FEEL THERE IS NO CHANGE. IT IS THE ONE AND ONLY BASIC ISSUE WHICH I SUGGESTED THAT IS, PAS' ACCUSATIONS THAT UMNO IS KAFIR AND THEY HAVE TO PROVE IT TO ALL MALAYSIANS.+ -- BERNAMA.

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