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Special six-member Umno veterans committee set up

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - A six-member committee comprising Umno veterans has been set up to assist the Government explain to the people the country's economic situation and steps taken to overcome the downturn, former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba said today.

Ghafar, who is the committee chairman, said the others in the committee were Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, Tan Sri Samad Idris, former Wanita chief Tan Sri Aishah Ghani, Ibrahim Azmi (Terengganu) and Datuk Dr Yusof Nor, ex-officio as he is the Umno information chief.

"I will submit the names today to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also Umno president," he said in an interview after taking part in TV3's Malaysia Hari Ini talk show.

Besides holding talks nationwide, he said, the committee would also brief overseas Umno Club members.

Ghafar said he had already met Umno leaders from Kelantan and Kedah and would hold discussions with those from Selangor and Malacca.

Ghafar, who is also the former Umno deputy president, said the most important thing now was to maintain political stability to tackle the economic downturn.

He said political instability would discourage tourists from coming here and also scare away potential foreign investors.

To a question on Umno's struggle, Ghafar said: "Umno's struggle remains the same ... for the race and nation.

"However, there are members who have joined the party to get wealthy or to hold positions."

He said certain Umno members had also changed in their struggle, adding "they have their own political agenda."

To a question on nepotism which was raised recently, he said: "Actually, Umno managed to include in the country's Constitution the provision for the Malays' special rights ... that is nepotism.

"The New Economic Policy was also necessary ... we can also call this nepotism. Under that policy, thousands of Malays received tertiary education and they now enjoy high positions in the public and private sector.

On Opposition parties questioning the Government's measures to overcome the economic downturn, he said: "We are a democratic country. The Government must reply to the Opposition's allegations and accusations."

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