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Politics, polls preparation to dominate Umno assembly

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POLITICAL issues and Umno's preparations for the coming general election will dominate the party's 53rd general assembly in Kuala Lumpur from June 18 to 20.

Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to deliver an important message to the 2,034 delegates to the assembly on Friday, with the emphasis on preparations for the coming general election, party secretary-general Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob said. "Since this general assembly may perhaps be the last before the general election, I believe political issues will dominate the topic of discussions at the gathering," he said at a media briefing on the three-day assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The Wanita and Youth wings of the party will hold their assembly a day before the general assembly.

Khalil declined to comment when asked, if Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman, may call for a snap election during the general assembly.

He said the Prime Minister may use the gathering as a platform to motivate Umno members and administrators to step up their efforts for the election.

"Umno general assembly will focus more on strengthening the party and BN at large, to ensure the party's success in the coming general election," he said.

Under the Constitution, the Government must call for a general election anytime now until April next year when the Parliament will be dissolved. Following that, the Government has a 60-day grace period to hold the general election.

With that, Khalil said delegates - from divisions and the party's Youth and Wanita wings, would certainly want to raise issues concerning Umno's preparations for the general election.

"Although delegates are not bound by what they want to say at the general assembly, they (delegates) have to bear in mind that they are representing their respective divisions and states ... have their own agenda and issues to be raised," he said.

Asked whether there is a motion concerning former Deputy Prime Minister and former Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Khalil said, "No, there is no such proposal. In fact, this was not even raised during Pas' Muktamar, so why do we need to bring it up during the general assembly?"

He also said the three main motions at the assembly would be those on the presidential address, religion and the economy.

The general assembly will begin with a pre-council meeting today, and followed by the Umno Youth and Wanita assemblies on Thursday.

After the Youth and Wanita assemblies, Mohd Khalil said a talk will be held to counter the Opposition's wild accusations and baseless allegations against the Government and party leaders.

He also said nine out of the 23 foreign political parties invited have confirmed their participation as observers at the Umno general assembly. They are from the Cambodian People's Party which will be sending five representatives, Laos People's Democratic Republic (four), Communist Party of China (three); and two each from the Union of Myanmar, Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Singapura, the Sudanese National Congress and the Great

Jamahiriyya Libya.

Stranka Demokratske Akcije of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party of Iraq have also confirmed sending a representative each to the assembly.

Mohd Khalil said Umno has also extended invitation to the Golkar party but the latter has yet to reply as it is currently involved in Indonesia's first parliamentary election.

Besides foreign parties, 18 Umno Clubs overseas - inMichigan, Cairo, Pakistan, Yogyakarta, Jordan, Medan, Jakarta, Melbourne, Ireland, UK & Eire, Bandung, Padang, Japan, Surabaya, Aceh, Boston and Auckland - have confirmed their participation at the assembly.

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