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Umno-Assembly

QUESTION MARK OVER UMNO PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

KUALA LUMPUR, June 13 (Bernama) -- The "surprise" promised by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his presidential message at the Umno General Assembly beginning Friday is keeping everyone guessing.

"That message will be a surprise, and it will also be a surprise to you (media) too," Dr Mahathir told reporters recently when asked about his message at the party's general assembly.

Umno members usually follow the president's message closely and this time they will certainly be anxious based on the hint that his message would have a surprise.

What is certain is that Dr Mahathir's message this time will not run away from the question of the party's preparation for the coming general election which must be held before July next year.

Besides the message which everyone is looking forward to, the assembly will certainly be interesting although there is no party election.

This is so because Umno will face a strong challenge from the opposition parties in the coming general election, say observers.

Dr Mahathir had said that he expected the general election this time to be dirty because the opposition parties were propagating a culture of slander, profanity and vulgarity.

Observers say Umno is expected to take the opportunity to strengthen solidarity during the general assembly particularly at the grassroots level following the expulsion of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the party in September last year.

The party is expected to redouble efforts to explain to its members and the public regarding the allegations and slander against the party pertaining to the Anwar issue.

Observers say the tactics employed by the opposition in exploiting the expulsion of Anwar to gain support from the people are adding on to the problem.

Dr Mahathir is expected to take the opportunity during the assembly to stress on loyalty to the party.

The president's message is also expected to dwell on measures taken by the government in reviving the national economy which have so far shown positive results.

As usual, the Umno General Assembly will be preceded by the Umno Youth and Wanita movements' assembly a day earlier.

-- BERNAMA .

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