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Khalil-Debate

UMNO READY FOR OPEN DEBATE TO COUNTER LIES, SAYS KHALIL

KUANTAN, Nov 8 (Bernama) -- Umno is prepared to hold public debates in its efforts to counter lies and misinformation by the opposition, party secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said.

The party has members who were prepared to use public debates as the fora to explain the true situation, said Khalil.

"If the opposition wants to thrash it out in the open, Umno too has leaders and experts in religious affairs, for example, who are prepared to debate. We've considered this matter and we can arrange for debates," he said.

However, Khalil said, public debates required opposition parties to set aside preconceptions and all involved to be open-minded in weighing arguments by both sides.

Khalil, who is also Information Minister, told reporters this when launching the Pahang state-level assembly of Barisan Nasional (BN) women's wing here.

Wanita Umno chief Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman was among the 4,000 women representatives of BN component parties present.

"PAS once asked us for a debate and insisted we take into account their environment. We can hold debates but they must also adhere to our conditions as well because we want to ensure there will be no disruptions," he said.

Khalil was also asked about the progress of Umno's anti-defamation operations launched by Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last Friday.

He said a special secretariat at the Umno information division was compiling defamatory materials covering all aspects to be carried in the Umno information bulletin together with Umno's rebuttals.

On the general election, Khalil said the BN women's wing shouldered a heavy task of ensuring large turnout of the women electorate in the coming general election to ensure victory for the governing coalition.

According to statistics, women accounted for 52 per cent of the electorate in some states and for a higher turnout than male voters on polling day, Khalil added.

--BERNAMA

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