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Khalil-Umno

UMNO TO CAPITALISE ON ASSEMBLY FOR POLL PREPARATIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will make the most of the party's general assembly this week to motivate and psych up members to get prepared for the coming general election, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said.

The party would also capitalise on the assembly to map out strategies to counter allegations by opposition parties, PAS in particular, he said.

"The assembly will be a gathering to build up a state of readiness and launch the last phase of preparations for election campaigning," he said.

Khalil, who was appointed Umno secretary-general succeeding Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik about a month ago, was briefing the media on the general assembly to be held at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Deputy Prime Minister and Umno vice president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is scheduled to set the momentum for the assembly by simultaneously opening the Umno Youth and Wanita Umno delegates conference on Thursday.

Abdullah is performing the duties of party deputy president who customarily opens the delegates' conference of the party's youth and women's wings.

Khalil, who is also Information Minister, said the party will also hold a public talk on Thursday night which would also be attended by delegates and observers to the assembly.

The assembly proper, to be attended by altogether 2,034 delegates, will be over three days starting Friday.

"The fact is we have to win the (general) election. All delegates will have to think election," Khalil said when asked whether delegates are free to debate on any motion at the assembly.

This week's assembly could very well be the last one before the coming general election due anytime before June next year, he said.

"We're now facing a general election. So we hope our speakers will be more political in their speeches," he said.

On whether there would be guidelines for delegates to speak about during debate, Khalil said since the speakers would be representing state Umno liaison committees, they would highlight views endorsed by the state Umno.

Asked whether delegates could discuss issues relating to jailed former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, he said: "The delegates can speak on subjects deemed relevant but we've to look at them from what perspective."

Anwar was dismissed from the Cabinet on Sept 2 last year and expelled as Umno deputy president the next day. He is now serving a six-year jail term for corruption.

Khalil said resolutions adopted by Umno divisions and submitted to the party headquarters for the general assembly have been compiled in a book for reference.

The Umno headquarters had reacted to some of the resolutions, while others did not need replying, he said.

Asked whether the Permatang Pauh division, which Anwar once led, had submitted any resolution relating to the former party deputy president, Khalil said: "None. Even the recent PAS general assembly did not raise the subject (relating to Anwar)."

He said Umno's immediate focus was not only on the governing Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition retaining power in the next general election but

also the two-thirds majority in Parliament.

The assembly, as has been traditionally, would debate motions on the presidential address, religion/social and economy/education, he said.

Khalil said the motion on economy would, among others, dwell on what the National Economic Action Council (NEAC) has done and would do further to revive the economy.

"We'll like to remind the people, especially the younger generation, to appreciate what we've been doing so far," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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