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Over 2,000 for meeting

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Umno's 54th general assembly beginning on May 11 will see 2,018 delegates gather to chart the party's course for the new millennium as well as elect top party officials.

The general assembly, the largest so far, will be at the Putra World Trade Centre.

The party's supreme council will send 41 delegates, Umno Youth and Wanita 10 each, and Umno at state-level 1,956 delegates.

Perak will have the highest number with 276 delegates, followed by Johor with 240.

These figures were released at a Press conference by party secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob.

The Youth and Wanita wings will hold their assemblies and elections on May 10 and results are expected at about 6pm.

Khalil said results for the general assembly elections the next day were expected around 6.30pm. It could be earlier as more counting staff and balloting stations were being deployed this time.

Delegates will elect three vice-presidents, a deputy permanent chairman and 25 members to the Umno supreme council.

Eight candidates are running for the post of deputy permanent chairman, nine for the three posts of vice-president and 63 for the supreme council.

Khalil said candidates for the three vice-president's posts, the supreme council and Youth and Wanita executive committees would gather at PWTC on May 7 to draw numbers for listing on electoral lists for the various posts.

The candidates and one representative could attend or candidates could send their representative. Wanita candidates are allowed two representatives.

He also said party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would deliver a pre-assembly message on Tuesday.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, party vice-president who is assuming the duties of deputy president, will simultaneously open the Umno Youth and Wanita assemblies.

After that, the Youth and Wanita will hold their separate assemblies.

The movements' members will then listen to their chiefs's messages before proceeding to hold their elections at about 11am.

After balloting is completed, there will be a debate on the motion of thanks to the Youth and Wanita chiefs' speeches.

On May 11, Dr Mahathir will open the party's general assembly and this will be followed by the party election at about 11am and counting at 3pm.

Khalil said results were expected by 6.30pm.

On May 12 and 13, the assembly will debate the president's speech and resolutions on religion and the economy.

Khalil said until today no more candidates had withdrawn and he believed that there would be no more change in the number of candidates contesting for posts in the party election.

"I think all of them have thought deeply about contesting ... there will not be any changes, I think," he said.

Asked whether there was a special unit to monitor the party elections, he said the Umno headquarters had its own methods to observe the situation during the election and the actions of candidates and delegates.

"We will always monitor the situation but I cannot disclose the actual

method ... we can detect the goings-on and we will also receive reports," he said.

Khalil added 31 political parties from 20 countries had been invited to the general assembly.

Up till yesterday, seven parties had confirmed attendance and he believed that at least 80 per cent of those invited would be present.

Parties which had confirmed attendance were from Cambodia, South Africa, Laos, Sudan, Yemen, North Korea and Singapore.

A total of 17 representatives and 13 observers from overseas Umno Clubs would also be present.

The assembly would be covered by 1,100 media representatives from 80 print and electronic media companies.

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