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Mahathir-Sanggang

UMNO WILL WORK HARD TO ENSURE VICTORY IN SANGGANG, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, March 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Umno will work hard to ensure its victory in the Sanggang state by-election on April 1.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that Umno would not regard the by-election as insignificant and would strive not to repeat its dismal performance in the Arau parliamentary by-election in 1998.

He said even though only a by-election, the opposition would exhaust all its energy and resources to win to prove that it was popular.

"Sometimes, we regard it as insignificant as we are under the notion that whatever happens, we are still the government," he said after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting, here.

Dr Mahathir said that Umno and the Barisan Nasional (BN) need to concentrate its efforts in ensuring a victory in Sanggang as the opposition would want to show that support for Umno had declined in Pahang by winning the by-election.

The Sanggang state seat, in the Mentakab parliamentary constituency, fell vacant on the death of Pahang state executive councillor Datuk Abdullah Kia on Feb 26 following a stroke.

Dr Mahathir said that the Umno machinery would work hard and mobilise its members to ensure the victory of its candidate.

"We are not afraid that we'll lose but we know the tactics of the opposition," he said.

He said that Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would lead the Barisan Nasional procession to accompany Redzwan Harun to file his nomination papers tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir said that Barisan Nasional Members of Parliament could not participate as they had to attend the Dewan Rakyat sitting.

"We don't want to have lack of quorum for debate," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that all Umno branches would continue to be active throughout the year and several activities would be held.

Interaction between the state Umno and the Supreme Council would also be further enhanced, he said.

When asked on the possibility that the meeting of the Conference of Rulers on Wednesday would discuss using their powers to unite the Muslims, Dr Mahathir said: "As far as I know, it's not on the agenda".

On the proposal by the Sungai Siput Umno division yesterday that prime ministers serve a maximum 12-year period, he said that the division had the right to make its proposal.

"Whether or not Umno accepts it, it is up to Umno," he said.

Asked by a reporter if there was a possibility that Umno would change the requirement that those intending to contest the presidency would need nominations from 30 per cent of the 165 divisions, he said: "If changes are to be made, we need to make amendments".

"We cannot make changes at the moment," he said.

On the Umno general assembly in May, Dr Mahathir said there was a possibility that Umno would invite more representatives from Indonesia if there was a good response.

Previously, Umno usually invites the ruling Golkar party.

At the meeting which lasted over three hours, Dr Mahathir said that the Supreme Council also discussed programmes channelled over Astro.

He said that the government would not regard the Chinese watching

Chinese programmes broadcast from overseas over Astro as not being loyal to the country.

"Only that we feel it is better if they were to watch the news over the local stations," he said.

"If we do not watch the news, there is a possibility that we may not get accurate information regarding our country," he said.

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