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Khalil-Umno

NORMAL AFFAIR AT 57TH UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SAYS KHALIL

KUALA LUMPUR, June 14 (Bernama) -- Next week's 57th Umno General Assembly, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's last as Umno president, is expected to be a normal affair with no special events lined up for the occasion.

Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said this was in accordance with the Prime Minister's wish that the general assembly be held like in previous years.

"Anyhow we still have a few more months before October (the month when Dr Mahathir leaves office)...the difference this time is definitely in the speeches."

He said this at the news conference on the 57th Umno General Assembly scheduled for June 17-21 at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here, today.

Khalil said the important aspect was the focus on Dr Mahathir's keynote address and the Umno president's message during his winding-up speech.

"If there is anything special (at the general assembly), then it is in the speeches including during the debate by delegates and not on events, preparation or facilities," he said.

Khalil said:"The delegates' focus is definitely on the president's speech, Dr Mahathir's keynote address and winding-up speech is eagerly awaited by all."

A total of 2,248 delegates including observers are expected to attend the Umno general assembly.

At last year's Umno general assembly, Dr Mahathir shocked the nation when the prime minister announced that he was stepping down from his party and government posts.

He withdrew his decision to quit after being coaxed by party leaders and members. Dr Mahathir later named his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as his successor.

Under this succession plan, Dr Mahathir continues to be the prime minister until the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting in October before handing his post to Abdullah.

On the president's keynote address to be debated by the state Umno liaison chiefs and heads of party wings, he said this was to show undivided support for Dr Mahathir and his deputy who would be taking over the leadership.

"This (debate) will be more authoritative in representing each state and depicts a more serious tone in recording the appreciation (for Dr Mahathir)," said Khalil.

He said three motions would be tabled -- president's keynote address, religion and education/economy.

On the 57th Umno general assembly, Khalil said it would begin Tuesday with a closed-door briefing by the party president for Supreme Council members, Youth, Wanita and Puteri exco members as well as state liaison chiefs, heads of state party wings and state party secretaries at Dewan Merdeka.

Later in the evening, the Umno deputy president would simultaneously open the Umno Youth, Wanita and Puteri assemblies.

The three Umno wings will hold their respective general assemblies on Wednesday with the Umno Youth in Dewan Tun Dr Ismail, Wanita (Dewan Merdeka) and Puteri (Dewan Tun Hussein Onn).

Opening of the Umno General Assembly is on Thursday at Dewan Merdeka. The party president will host a dinner for the delegates the same day with the deputy president hosting another the next day.

Sixty-seven local and foreign media organisations have registered with the Umno headquarters to cover the Umno general assembly.

Eighteen foreign political parties including that from Cambodia, Syria, Iran, Turkey and Indonesia will send observers to the event.

Representatives from 44 Umno clubs abroad will also be present.

-- BERNAMA

HS KHY ZUL