

15/06/2003

Khalil: No surprises at Umno general assembly

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants next week's party's annual general assembly to be a normal affair without any special events lined up.

Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said the party respected Dr Mahathir's wish and had decided not to have any surprise for the three-day assembly, scheduled to start on Thursday.

"The difference this time is definitely in the speeches. Delegates will surely be looking forward to Dr Mahathir's keynote address at the opening of the assembly and his winding-up speech."

Khalil, who is also Information Minister, said this at a Press conference on preparations for the assembly, which will be held at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Supposedly Dr Mahathir's last assembly as party president before stepping down in October, many observers had expected the party to organise a grand celebration.

Khalil said 2,248 delegates, including observers, were expected to attend the assembly.

He said the move to allow all State liaison committee chairmen to debate the president's keynote address was aimed at showing undivided support for Dr Mahathir and his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who would be taking over the leadership.

This is the first time that the State chairmen would be debating the keynote address as previously it was done by State representatives.

"As they are the chairmen, their debates will be more authoritative and serious in recording the appreciation for Dr Mahathir's contribution to the party and country," he said, adding that as usual three motions would be tabled - president's keynote address, religion/education and economy.

Khalil said 67 local and foreign media organisations had registered with the party headquarters to cover the assembly proceedings.

He said 18 foreign political parties, including from Cambodia, Syria, Iran, Turkey and Indonesia, would be sending observers to the event. There would also be representatives from the 44 Umno overseas clubs.

Asked about the possibility of any division proposing an emergency resolution, Khalil said as of today, none had been received.

"But according to the party's constitution, one has to give a 14-day notice before tabling an emergency resolution. However, the assembly's permanent chairman can decide on the action to be taken if there is such a request after consulting the supreme council members."

The assembly will begin on Tuesday with a closed-door briefing by the party president for supreme council members, Youth, Wanita and Puteri exco members, State liaison chiefs, heads of State party wings and State party secretaries.

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

On Wednesday, the three movements will proceed with their assemblies.

Dr Mahathir will open the assembly proper on Thursday at Dewan Merdeka.

On the same night he will host a dinner for the delegates while Abdullah will host a dinner on Friday.