

**General Assembly To Drive Umno Towards Election Preparedness**  
**Bernama**  
**November 28, 2011**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 28 (Bernama) -- No matter when the announcement for the 13th general election will be made, the 62th Umno General Assembly scheduled to begin tomorrow until Dec 3 at the Putra World Trade Centre here will become the platform to drive the party towards election preparedness.

Although the current parliamentary terms ends in March 2013, various quarters, ranging from the governing party to the opposition, as well as political analysts, had anticipated that the next general election would be held sooner.

However, to get a straight answer about the actual date for the next general election from Prime Minister Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who is also Umno President, is probably the most difficult task to do at the moment.

When he was asked in a recent interview with Bernama on whether the this year's Umno general assembly would be the last assembly before the 13th general election, the prime minister spontaneously said: "Who said so? Maybe not".

Nevertheless, Najib had, of late, been advising party members to be prepared to face the next general election, and hence, giving some kind of a signal that he seriously wanted the party's election machinery to be fueled up for the election.

Umno Information Chief Datuk Ahmad Maslan said it would be a "big loss" if the topic of general election were not raised at the assembly since many believed that the general election was just around the corner.

"I hope the delegates will discuss the topic in detail, especially on how to win back those lost seats, strengthen our positions in existing seats and wrest back the lost states," he was reported as saying at a media conference last week.

Umno party election, which was supposed to be held during this year's assembly, had been postponed for 18 months.

It was reported that the decision was not made on purpose, but was aimed at strengthening the party, prevent sabotaging efforts, foster unity and resolve the party's internal issues before facing the biggest challenge - the general election.

The first time Umno Supreme Council decided to postpone the party polls was in 1999 where it was postponed to May 2000 to enable to party to focus on 1999 general election.

Debaters for this year's assembly had also been reminded to avoid making statements that would touch the sensitivities of other races while discussing the Malay agendas.

Even more than that, they were also reminded to raise important issues and not to simply criticise others without giving supporting facts and suggestions.

Among those who had given the reminders was Ahmad Maslan, who was reported as saying that in the context of 1Malaysia, the Malay agendas could still be expanded properly without hurting the feelings of other races in the country.

"However, it would be wrong if we talk about the 1Malaysia concept without touching about the Malay agendas," he said.

A total of 5,447 delegates will attend the Umno General Assembly this year comprising 2,627 delegates from 191 divisions nationwide, 944 from Wanita, 942 from Youth and 934 from Puteri.

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