

Anwar super confident of Putrajaya takeover
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INTERVIEW Having given a string of interviews this week, one would think that PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim would run out of things to say.

But meeting with Malaysiakini for an interview yesterday, Anwar was chatty and upbeat, hardly betraying the slightest apprehension over the sodomy trial verdict due to be delivered on Monday.

anwar ibrahim interview with malaysiakini 4 Requesting a cup of coffee from an aide, the 64-year-old lamented about being "a wee bit sleepy" at that time, and went on to add that this was not due to his ongoing nationwide ceramah tour.

Instead, it was Anwar's "health freak" son, Ehsan, back from New York to attend his sister's wedding, who was the reason for this - by being a "taskmaster" in pestering Anwar to "lift dumbbells" at "odd hours" of the day.

"This morning, after the subuh prayers... we arrived home around 2am. We then wake up for the dawn prayers, but at 6.30am, Ehsan says, 'Let's go exercise'. I told him, 'No, no, I do that at 8 o'clock'," Anwar said of his little-spoken-about son.

A Master's student in the Big Apple, Ehsan's absence throughout his father's trial has been used as a point of attack by his detractors and this little peek into the duo's relationship could be well-timed by the consummate politician.

The timing of the verdict delivery in the Sodomy II trial also appears to be "favourable" to Anwar and the opposition coalition, with Anwar joking that a number of coalition leaders and supporters felt that if he was jailed, it would garner even more support for Pakatan Rakyat in the coming general election.

anwar ibrahim interview with malaysiakini 5 Regardless of the outcome of Monday's verdict, the ever optimistic Anwar insists that Pakatan will make considerable gains in the general election - "enough to take over Putrajaya".

States that will fall into the coalition's hands, he said, are Perak and Negri Sembilan, with the BN mounting a formidable challenge to Pakatan's efforts in the southern states of Johor and Malacca.

All the same, Anwar says, Pakatan will take more seats in both states, as well as in Sarawak and Sabah, where "substantial gains" will be made.

In the following excerpt of Malaysiakini's exclusive interview, the Permatang Pauh MP also concedes that incumbency, as well as Menteri Besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat's age and ailing health, may be a problem for PAS in Kelantan.

The interview has been edited for language and brevity.

Which states will be problematic for Pakatan in the next GE?

They're in the south, Negri Sembilan, Malacca and Johor. More so, Malacca and Johor. Johor because we have huge difficulties in getting across.

Not that people don't come (to the ceramah). In Muar, 4,000 people came, that's a huge crowd for Muar. But that is an exception. We can't get a place near a town, where people can converge. Like in Ledang, a

comfortable crowd but (it was) so difficult to get there.

pkrcongress 271110 jimmy chua jui meng Are we better off compared to 2008? Certainly. Not just Keadilan, but DAP's networking in the urban areas of Johor is much better now. PAS has been penetrating new areas. Keadilan machinery after (Johor PKR chief Dr Chua) Jui Meng took over has managed to really beef up, both in resources and machinery - far better than in 2008.

Then we have Sabah and Sarawak. Sarawak, you have this belt of Chinese majority, penetration into three or four pockets of Dayak group.

Can we get a majority of the seats? No. Realistically, we can manage 30 or 40 percent of the seats. Sabah is a different story.

Are you saying you're confident of taking Malacca and Johor?

No, I'm not saying that. Johor will take a lot more effort. Malacca, we'll gain substantially and Negri Sembilan is easier. The mood is good.

Do you think you'll capture Negri Sembilan?

Yes.

Is Penang a solid state for Pakatan?

Yes, solid. Which means we can gain in Penang. That's my point.

The main focus of the Perkasa-Umno types is to abuse and accuse (Penang Chief Minister Lim) Guan Eng. It does not work. I go to Penang a lot. Unlike the other places where I go as a national leader, but when I go to Penang I sit down, go to masjid. There's no impact. Guan Eng, has been successful in that.

The Malays... know he is Chinese, he is DAP. I'm not suggesting they agree with everything he says and DAP policies, but they see him as a credible leader.

What about Kedah, Kelantan?

I'm going to Kelantan today (Thursday). There are some concerns, and the state government has to address them now. It has to be done now. The water issue. Issue of land in some of the constituencies.

I'm going to ask Tok Guru Nik Aziz (Kelantan MB Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat) for advice and how this can be resolved faster.

There is the problem of incumbency in Kelantan. (PAS) has been there for too long. Maybe people think it's time for a change?

pakatan ceramah shah alam 041211 nik aziz Tok Guru Nik Aziz has a certain flair about him. People say he is old, he has been there for some time. (But) he is clean, doesn't cheat us in this society where you have too many scoundrels squandering wealth...

But the people do say he is getting old, so he should be planning (to retire), so the team he presents is important.

I mean, I would share with him some views in private today, because the people would like to see the team that is backing him presented in this general election. It must be seen to be a credible team.

Maybe some people are thinking Nik Aziz should not go on anymore. He's old and ill.

I'm not sure if that sentiment is that strong. I've heard about it. They say we need him at least to make sure the issue of integrity and good governance is there.

He's clean, that's good, but...

Yeah, I know. You need a stronger team to back him up. That's important.

So basically, he'll remain, but need to push up the second liners?

Yes, which is what they're doing now. But if they can handle some issues fast, like the water issue, which is a real issue. I think we have to concede. If they can handle this and land issue, I think it should be okay.

Is there a successor for Tok Guru Nik Aziz who you can work with?

I don't have a problem. Why should I have a problem? The important thing is the successor should be acceptable to the people of Kelantan.

What about Kedah?

It is far better among the Malays and the rural Malays, but there are some concerns with the Chinese over some pronouncements, like the liquor areas, etc. I have discussed this with Ustaz Hadi (PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang) and both of us will discuss with Ustaz Azizan (Kedah MB Azizan Abdul Razak).

penang kedah timber logging azizan abdul razak 310708 03The first reaction has been, 'Okay, back to status quo and we'll look at it.' (Azizan) wants it to be well-regulated. Like here, with (Selangor exco member) Hasan Ali.

The point I will concede is that it is okay if it is a Malay village, with 80 percent Malays, we don't need to have a kedai arak. If it is very mixed, majority non-Malay, we shouldn't create problems.

To put labels such as 'under 18 years' or 'Muslims cannot buy', is okay to me. But we should not create a situation where new rules, affecting non-Muslims particularly, have to be imposed.

Other than these issues, I think we should be fine. Sarawak, Perak we'll do better.

Will you regain Perak?

Yes. All studies, all surveys indicate that.

Back to Kedah. Why do you think issues that seem to concern the Chinese community keep occurring?

PAS is the majority there, so concerns about gambling and liquor will crop up from time to time. I don't believe we can dismiss that. We have to provide the forum for Muslims and the Chinese and Indian communities to sit down and reason out.

It doesn't mean we should just maintain the status quo. If there are ample reasons why liquor cannot be sold at certain localities, I think they will concede. These things can be done.

Is it a case of the PAS government there taking a more hardline stance on these issues?

These are concerns expressed by the grassroots. Of course, we have to listen to them, some we have to explain to them. It is not healthy to derail the process.

How are things in Selangor?

Selangor is interesting because the masses, and the business community in particular, have a lot of reservations, and a lot of criticism. Particularly those who have committed 'deeds' in the past.

NONEKhalid seems to be adamant to say, 'Look, the agreement must be corrected' and therefore you have these... delays in the process.

He has a case too, although I look at it and say, 'Never mind, what to do, they are businessmen, they work with everybody.'

But he says, 'If there is evidence of hanky panky, and they paid millions of ringgit to the former administration, I want to have this corrected.' In that sense, he is more principled. So I think we are adjusting between the two (approaches).

Khalid has a point, so I don't push beyond that. Particularly when there are cases where millions of ringgit have been disbursed and the agreements are lopsided. Taking land just like that. It was a huge problem... a major stumbling block for Khalid. He became very prejudiced in not wanting to go through with the same set of rules.

But having said that, when it comes to work on the ground, you can't fault him. I mean, it's not easy to persuade him to get some of the programmes on the ground because he has been very much a corporate player... but when he agrees to something, that's it.

Like micro-credit. I said: 'Do it fast. Five million ringgit, plus five.' This man, once he was convinced, he said: '50 million, then 70.' Because we can afford it.

He was initially very reluctant, for he thought this would be something messy, working on the ground. But I said to the people, it counts... Having said that, it is very difficult for Umno to penetrate the ground.

Would Khalid stay as MB if Pakatan retains Selangor?

Well, it depends. Some feel he should continue to stay. Some feel if we do take Putrajaya, we would need his experience and expertise in building up and correcting major national institutions.

How will Pakatan fare in Pahang?

I'm quite confident we will get more seats. You know, Umno has huge problems, too, to explain. You talk about country's deficit, it doesn't register. But talk about cows and condos, zakat money, people stealing shampoo and getting two years in jail, the same as Khir Toyo.

Of course they'll say, leaders are the same. There is always this permissive kind of view that is contrary to the Islamic spirit, which calls for reform, but (the rakyat) is resigned to the fact that it will be the same.

But when we come with issues that affect them directly, I see the people get very enraged. This cow issue is very interesting. You mention this and 'Oh!' but you mention one trillion ringgit in deficit... or financial outflows...

Pakatan will make these gains in the next GE, regardless of the trial verdict?

Those who feel that Anwar is guilty will think that Anwar is guilty. Those who think he isn't will think he isn't. What the judge says will have no bearing whatsoever on public perception, except for a small group.

You seem very confident of winning Putrajaya?

I am very confident we can win. And with me in jail, there will be a few percentage points extra, which means we should be getting a better majority. Even without me in jail, we will win, but probably with a

lesser majority.

anwar ibrahim interview with malaysiakini 8I've been working, listening, talking to people and looking at the figures, and even talking to (the establishment) guys. You know in 2008, in my discussions with the establishment guys, the more serious of them know we have been making major inroads.

But now I tell you, not many of them are confident. They say the state of Negri Sembilan would fall.

In Sabah, many of (the opposition leaders) in the state are confident that they will take over the state. I wouldn't say say so, I would say we would win a substantial number of seats.

So it is not an unrealistic proposition... in Pahang, some of our civil society groups go to remote areas and talk about the need for change.

Last night was interesting. A kid chased me and said: "I am from Pemuda Umno."

I was thinking, 'Oh no...' but he said: "But I swear, I support you." By right I should have said: "Why are you still in Pemuda Umno. Quit it," but I said: "Thank you." It was very emotional.

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