

In Perak, Anwar names candidates
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COMMENT Pakatan Rakyat chief campaigner Anwar Ibrahim, on a two-stop visit to Perak last night, announced more PKR candidates and reiterated his intention to contest a seat in the state but stopped short of saying which one it would be.

At the end of a 65-minute speech in Gerik on the Perak-Kelantan border, Anwar announced Rear Admiral (ret) Imran Abdul Hamid, one of several retired former senior officers of the armed forces who have joined opposition parties in recent months, as the PKR candidate for the parliamentary seat of Lumut and named dental surgeon Meor Ahmad Isharra Ishak for the Padang Rengas one.

Anwar hailed Imran, an electrical engineer by training, as conversant in naval matters and thus equipped to man the fort at Lumut, where a naval base is located, and the locus of the controversial billion ringgit submarine purchase of derisive memory.

Anwar said Dr Meor Ahmad, 42, had been active in AMK, the youth wing of PKR, for several years and is one of the young professionals who have joined the party in the early years of the reformasi movement.

Anwar's first stop was at Lenggong, about 45km west of Kuala Kangsar, where he urged a crowd of about 2,500 to seize the opportunity provided by GE13 to reverse the downward slide of the country.

Other than exhorting the largely PAS-favouring crowd - Lenggong and Gerik parliamentary seats are to be contested by the Islamic party - to opt for Pakatan candidates wherever any one of the coalition's nominees were fielded, Anwar did not go into the specifics of PKR candidatures.

A half-hour past midnight

But at Gerik, a relatively small town whose electorate is not more than 30,000-strong - small by Perakian standards - the presence of a huge crowd of about 8,000 people prompted him to speak till half an hour past midnight, a long spell considering the next day was a work day.

Normally, he would wind things up before midnight but this being the final prelude to polling, Anwar detained an intent crowd which had an unusually large proportion of women.

Attuned, as ever, to the mood of the crowd gathered, Anwar said he did not mind the travails he had to endure because of Umno's relentless harassment of him ("They not only stripped me naked, they humiliated me by measuring my private parts") for reason of uplifting instances of sympathy otherwise ordinary individuals demonstrated towards him

during his six-year incarceration in Sungai Buloh and after he was released in 2004.

In a lighter vein, when explaining why he was interested to contest in Perak, Penang-born Anwar said he could also be considered a Perakian because his secondary school education had been at the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar and he also spent two years under ISA detention (1974-76) in Kamunting.

"Tomorrow, I'll explain to my supporters in Permatang Pauh and persuade them to understand my reasons for wanting to move to Perak.

"They have been my loyal supporters and they would be disappointed to see me go but sometimes we must submit to the demands of a larger agenda," said Anwar.

"Pakatan has to regain Perak, hence all efforts must be made to achieve this end especially after we were illegitimately ejected after just 11 months of rule (March 2008 to February 2009)," he reminded them.

Zahid to 'bury' Anwar

As it is, the PKR supremo has announced candidates for all but four of the 10 parliamentary seats the party will contest in Perak.

The announced candidates are Dr Muhammad Nur Manuty (Bagan Serai), Mustapha Kamil Ayub (Pasir Salak), Dr Lee Boon Chye (Gopeng - incumbent), Imran Hamid (Lumut), Dr Meor Ahmad (Padang Rengas), and Dr D Jeyakumar (incumbent for Sungei Siput, though now of PSM).

PKR candidates have yet to be named for Tanjong Malim, Tapah, Bagan Datoh and Tambun.

Speculation is that Tanjong Malim would see Brig-Gen (ret) Abdul Hadi as the nominee, and Tapah would see either a Chinese PKR candidates or a nominee from the PKR women's wing.

That would leave the Tambun and Bagan Datoh seats un-nominated, both having Umno ministers, Husni Hanadzlah and Zahid Hamidi, as incumbents.

The latter has already made things fiery by saying that he would exert himself to bury Anwar should the Pakatan chief decamp from Penang to Perak.

His talk is reminiscent of the braggadocio of Ali Rustam, the Malacca chief minister who in November 2007 warned more-seats-demanding PPP that the Umno-led BN had ruled Malaysia for a half century and would continue to do so for another 50 years, with or without its coalition partners.

Four months later, the ruling coalition's downslide was triggered, a descent that has been well-nigh irreversible.

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