

Anwar: I'm staying put in Permatang Pauh

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By Susan Loone

All that flurry about which seat to contest turned out to be much ado over nothing as PKR supremo Anwar Ibrahim finally declared that he would defend his Permatang Pauh parliamentary seat.

His announcement comes days after he expressed his intention to contest a seat in Perak, namely Tambun, where he visited last night but did not reveal the chosen seat.

Anwar, who is on a road show in Penang, made the declaration at a ceramah in Taman Pauh in front of a crowd of about 2,000 as they gave him a big round of applause.

"When I return to Permatang Pauh, I had to modify my decision. My relations with Permatang Pauh people are like family. They have always supported me no matter how difficult the situation was.

"I remember, they supported Azizah (Anwar's wife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail) when all others failed (in the 2004 election)," he added.

"I came back to the kampung and someone told me, how can the next prime minister come from Tambun?" he stressed.

"I am too indebted to all in Permatang Pauh and therefore I will stay here. This is a matter of heart," he said to loud applause.

Anwar said there was a possible hike in support when he was planning to contest in Perak, and a possibility of winning a few more seats.

He apologised to his voters when he said he will not be around much during the campaign period, and pleaded for the people's support.

"Please help me defend the Permatang Pauh fortress."

Earlier, at a ceramah in Kubang Semang, he revealed that if he does not contest in Tambun, he would contest in Permatang Pauh.

He said he has narrowed down his choice of seats to two.

If he does not contest in Tambun, he will field PKR Srikandi (young women's group) chief Siti Aishah Shaik Ismail there, he added.

Anwar (right) said that if he contests in Perak, he has to focus there fully and cannot make trips round the country during the campaign period.

"I can't just come for nomination day and then leave for campaign in other states," he told a crowd of some 300 people earlier this evening.

'Even Wan Azizah not very agreeable'

He added that even his wife Wan Azizah was not very agreeable to him contesting in Perak, saying she preferred him in Permatang Pauh.

"They stood by you in the past, you can't just leave for Perak," he related her as saying.

He then tried to explain why the proposal to contest in Perak came up.

"I just want to explain how the thought crossed our minds about contesting in Perak. It is all because of strategy. We just wanted to shore up support there."

Anwar said he will announce in Taman Pauh if he was contesting in the constituency.

"Give me a few hours, I still need to discuss with a few leaders including those from Tambun," he added.

During his speech, a PKR leader asked the crowd repeatedly if Anwar should remain in Permatang Pauh, and they responded by giving him a resounding "Yes!".

Later, at a packed ceramah in Sungai Ara, Anwar announced the candidates for the Balik Pulau and Bayan Baru parliament seats.

He announced Sim Tze Tzin - the Pantai Jerejak incumbent - as the Bayan Baru candidate.

Anwar also announced Muhd Bakhtiar Wan Chik as the Balik Pulau candidate, replacing incumbent Yusmadi Yusuff.

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