

With less than two days to go, Anwar is bullish on Putrajaya

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INTERVIEW Pakatan Rakyat leader Anwar Ibrahim has never been more optimistic about taking Putrajaya than now. In an interview with The Malay Mail and Oriental Daily, he explains why.

How's the campaign going so far?

Anwar: I'm very encouraged by the support after nomination, especially from the younger voters. It's very apparent that they support us. That the majority of Malaysians support us. I used to be cautiously optimistic, but then Najib Razak used the same thing (campaign promises), so I'm now quite optimistic.

As optimistic as you are in 2008?

Johor, Sabah and Sarawak. We have been working on Johor and East Malaysia during the last five years. Majority of the support is not like the level in Penang, Perak and Selangor, but I believe it is now much higher.

NONEWith Lim Kit Siang to push it further among the Chinese in Johor, former army chief General (Rtd.) Md Hashim Hussein in Johor Baru, Salahuddin Ayub standing in Pulau and Idris Jauzi in Batu Pahat ... this combination of three leaders helps push the Malay support.

But I'm convinced we can take 53 percent of the seats. Only concern is the usual cheating... the foreigners, dubious voters on the roll, ferrying of outstation voters and the like. That is why we must counter this by coming out in droves to vote.

In 2008 you did extremely well in the northern states. You feel you can do better?

I believe we can. Kedah we have problems with some seats. Penang we can do much better. I'm giving a lot of attention to Perak. It will be a major boost for Pakatan's chances. In Selangor, I'm optimistic about Sabak Bernam and Pandan, which we failed to capture the last time.

Najib said three young guys must be slaughtered: Rafizi Ramli, Nurul Izzah and Tony Pua. Tony can survive easily. Rafizi too, but the toughest will be Izzah because of the amount of money and the 12,000 voters from outside Lembah Pantai.

In Negeri Sembilan, we're optimistic about a few seats. Johor, we're surprised. There're quite a number of seats. We don't know if we can take over the state, but there'll be a major breakthrough.

You're looking at winning 12 parliamentary seats in Johor. Is it still a realistic achievement after almost two weeks of campaigning?

Since my last trip there, it's quite reasonable to expect between 10 and 12 seats.

You mentioned Gen Hashim. Is the sudden addition of ex-army officers, and now former inspector-general of police Musa Hasan, a strategy to instil confidence in the people that if you get Putrajaya, these senior ex-servicemen will ensure the Armed Forces and police will respect the people's mandate and facilitate a smooth transition of power?

There are two issues. The perception is we are weak in the Malay ground. The army has always been associated with Malays so it is to us very reassuring to have an ex general, deputy chief of army, the admiral in Perak and also a general in Behrang.

That covers our section of Malay base. Do not underestimate the number of ex-army personnel. It's a major breakthrough.

Second issue is security. The Chinese and urban professional Malays are concerned whether a smooth transition of power will take place. The generals came in with the reassurance of that in the beginning. Musa seems to be quite optimistic of PR's chances of coming into power. They are quite certain about a peaceful and smooth transition.

Are you reassured over Najib's statement that his party will respect the outcome of this election? And that the people's mandate will be adhered to?

NONEI commended positively Najib's reassurance. It was quite surprising to us for him to come up with a statement like that. His repeated statements is that there should be civility during the campaigning. I'm not saying they're honouring it. I mean if you watch TV3 there's no civility at all. At least he made a point to say it.

If you say civility, then give access to the media. If you say civility, then make sure the indelible ink is actually indelible. Let the Election Commission answer why 42 postal voters who should be army personnel are foreigners! It is not answered satisfactorily.

How have the police been conducting themselves with Pakatan?

We initially had problems with the police during our public programmes and rallies, but since nomination there were hardly any problems with the police. There were some exceptions, where military commanders became overzealous. But there has been a marked change of conduct among camp commanders to ensure fair elections.

I was in a mosque in Balik Pulau when a Perkasa group switched off the lights. Immediately, the police came in to help settle the matter. I must commend the professionalism of the police. I must thank them for that.

Would you interpret the change of attitude as acceptance of a possible Pakatan government?

What we want is for the police to be decent and proper, even with BN candidates. Recently, there has been a marked change and it's something we welcome and it's most reassuring.

What about the civil service? Have you won them over?

With the exception of the senior people who are aligned to Umno! The problem is when they get specific instructions... I was in Tawau, where the local council did not discriminate against Pakatan parties. I was in the Kuantan and despite protests from BN, the officers said they had to perform their duties to ensure fair elections. I didn't see this in 2008.

NONEI would never have imagined to have a town hall or padang to be used for election campaigning, but now we're able to. It reflects the attitude of the civil service, although Umno is going back to them and saying, "Look we are the people with the Malay agenda, Malay supremacy and capable of protecting civil servants."

But Pakatan will bring back respect, integrity and professionalism to the civil service. I worked umpteen years as a minister and civil servant. Some of them have impeccable track records. If you over-politicise and overrule decisions because of tenders and contracts, it's political interference. Therefore, I believe we can bring back professionalism in the civil service.

The Chinese seem more excited about change than Malays.

The open expression from the Chinese is very new. You could see it in 2008 but you can re-sense it now. Aunties and uncles, they shake my hand. For me I'm deeply

touched. I received it in 2008 but no way as close as I observe now.

If you go to the rural areas there are huge Malay turnouts. This is what gives me the encouragement. If you go to Sabah and Sarawak, not only the Ibans but the Malays as well embrace us. In Wangsa Maju and Setiawangsa, 80 percent of those at ceramah sessions are Malays standing in the rain.

Are Felda settlers also opening up to Pakatan?

I went to Bera, it's very remote, with very conservative Malays. But the excitement of the 90 percent Malays there, it was amazing.

But large crowds do not necessarily translate into similar numbers of votes.

That's true, so too are the BN's programmes, where people get to makan and get allowances. You can see the level of enthusiasm, but the challenge is to translate that into votes.

Wan azizah at felda ulu tebrau pkr 270413 03.jpgAs opposed to 2008, the BN has more ammunition to attack you because you have administered four states, where there have been shortcomings.

Water is a major problem in Selangor, but the people know that they are not paying for the water and they understand the Syabas issue way better than the one in Johor; so we may have to explain to Johor the attack on Selangor.

In terms of track record, they can compare Perak which we were robbed of, with Selangor. People must have a government they can trust. You cannot abuse your power to enrich your family members. You say you want to help the Malays, but who gets contracts worth billions of ringgit? Your son. People know these things, you can't fool them.

Compared with 2008, Dr Mahathir Mohamad wasn't this aggressive in campaigning against PR.

Mahathir knows he's in deep trouble. He has his minister friends to help him because he thinks Najib alone cannot deliver. Mahathir is actually helping us because the more he talks, the more votes we get.

NONEPerhaps they need assurance that if you were to win, you will not go on a witch hunt. Anyway, the country needs to move forward. You don't have time to go on witch hunts.

True! People say, "this fellow must go to jail". We won't do that but you must return the money you stole from the people. But it's also like this: Unlike Najib, I'm not scared of Mahathir. He will not stop the monopoly of Petronas contracts. I will stop with immediate effect. There'll be transparency, where you have a proper tender process. Mahathir will not stop this Astro monopoly. We will stop it.

We will have to review the IPPs, these monopolies make people suffer. Why must we pay Astro knowing that it's the highest rate in the region? Because there's no competition. Look at the phone service. Because you give it to your cronies, they make billions.

And then, the infrastructure is weak. "Kat bukit so tak ada reception." Nonsense! In Switzerland, with all their mountains, they have better reception. Now they're comparing us with Thailand and Indonesia.

How do you propose to address the special interest groups that contributed to PR? How do you appease them while at the same time assure the people it will not be business as usual in Putrajaya?

We paid a heavy price by saying "no" to them. That's why you had all these frogs and we lost Perak. But if they are good and can deliver at a fair price, we will back them but follow due process. See how Abdul Khalid Ibrahim managed Selangor? He said "no" to a RM2 company seeking a RM40 million project. I said "no" to a Kedah exco for excess claims.

The MB briefed me, I said I don't care. Better remove him earlier before the media gets hold of it and expose him. Of course the moment he was told he said I was a communist... a "Cina". Whatever. That's the truth. People in Kedah, they know. That is why people accept what Pakatan stands for. We have sound policies to manage the country's wealth and ensure they go back to the people.

Hudud is still an unresolved issue for Pakatan. This time, a stand needs to be made. So as leader of the pact, what is your stand on hudud?

As a democratic pact, we must not disallow our partners from articulating their views. We must allow for reasonable discourse and debate. DAP and PAS can work together while pursuing their own ideologies.

haron din on hudud 240413 new straits times Even within the BN you have various parties pursuing separate agendas. Hudud is a difficult issue to resolve because the understanding of hudud itself is not deep.

It's not all about chopping arms and legs. So let PAS articulate. They have been talking about hudud even before the formation of the coalition, while DAP has been pursuing secularism.

The issue of hudud is that of the setting up of an Islamic federation. To do that there must be an amendment to the constitution. To achieve this you need a two-thirds majority in Parliament. This means you need the agreement of all the Muslim parliamentarians and some of the non-Muslims. Do you seriously think you'll be able to get it?

Hudud is about being syariah compliant. This includes having a free media and an independent judiciary. There are 101 things we have to do that are syariah compliant. Don't dictate; don't insult; don't be corrupt; don't threaten other people; don't be racist; don't revoke (Bersih co-chairperson S) Ambiga's citizenship. That should be observed.

But what kind of strategy is this for PAS to shoot itself and its partners in the foot by bringing up hudud at a time when you are trying to woo the non-Muslims as well as liberal Muslims?

Well, they need to assert their ideologies because there are members of the electorate that hudud appeals to. But don't forget we are partners and whatever we do must be on consensus. Even the issues over the seven seats, we finally resolved them because there is mutual respect in Pakatan, with no one party being dominant.

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