

Anwar vows to uphold Malays, Islam's position in constitution

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Shakira Buang

JOHOR BY-ELECTIONS | Anwar Ibrahim would rather not be prime minister should he not be allowed to uphold the constitutional position of Malays and Islam.

He told this to a multi-ethnic crowd at a rally in Muar, Johor last night as he highlighted the opposition's allegations of him neglecting the Malays and Islam as baseless.

"Who (in the government) is questioning Malay leadership, Malay power, Islam as the religion of the federation, the Malay language, the special position of the Malays and the sovereignty of the Malay rulers?"

"(The answer is) no one is doing so. We are all friends (in government). I would not want to be prime minister if (my allies) are questioning the principles outlined in the Federal Constitution," he said.

The rally was Anwar's first appearance for the ongoing Simpang Jeram by-

election campaign, where challengers Perikatan Nasional's main campaign message had been focused on racial and religious issues.

'I don't care'

The opposition lawmakers, he pointed out, did not institute reforms for "Malays and Islam" when they were in power and were instead abusing their powers.

"Was Islam placed in a better position? Was there a reduction in corruption? Was the practice of robbing the people reduced? No. They only had a lot of slogans," he said.

Anwar explained his administration was different because all races were given proper constitutional protection.

The premier was unperturbed by criticisms or slander as he said his singular focus was to turn Malaysia into a regional economic powerhouse.

"(The opposition) can insult me all they want... It is not new. I've been insulted for 25 years. I don't care," he added.

Anwar urged Simpang Jeram voters to vote for Pakatan Harapan to ensure that their constituency will participate in the federal government's economic push.

The Simpang Jeram polls will see a three-way contest between Harapan's Nazri Abdul Rahman, PN's Mohd Mazri Yahya and independent S Jeganathan.

Slightly over half the constituents of Simpang Jeram are Malay.

The results of the polls will have little impact on the balance of power in the 56 seat Johor legislative assembly, which only has three members of the opposition.

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