

Anwar rocks Perak, Pak Lah no-show
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As campaigning entered the crucial final lap, PKR MCPX de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim blazed through Perak yesterday to rally voters.

anwar tour perak 050308 gopeng mixy crowdAt every stop, large crowds waited for hours to greet the former deputy premier, who started his tour in Tanjung Malim in the morning before making his way up north through Bota, Bidor, Tapah, Gopeng, Sungai Siput and finally Bagan Serai.

The crowds were wooed by his populist messages which included reducing fuel prices, providing free education and the release of the five Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) leaders detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

By about 7pm, Anwar had arrived at Simpang Pulai, Gopeng, where he was greeted with a hero's welcome and rapturous chants of reformasi from a racially-mixed crowd of more than 2,000.

anwar tour perak 050308 gopeng lee boon chyeDespite spending the entire day on the road, Anwar showed no signs of fatigue and rallied Gopeng voters to back PKR candidates Lee Boon Chye (Gopeng), Chan Ming Kai (Simpang Pulai), Chang Lih Kang (Teja) and PAS candidate Radzi Zainon (Sungai Rapat).

He also launched a scathing attack on the Election Commission for aborting the use of indelible ink at the eleventh hour. He lamented that "phantoms" would now roam on polling day.

"Barisan Nasional is scared of losing. That's why they aborted the use of indelible ink," said Anwar to loud cries of "betul" (correct) from the crowd.

What's wrong with helping Indians?

anwar tour perak 050308 sg siput kampung crowdAn hour later, Anwar arrived at a small Malay village in Batang Kulim near Kuala Kangsar where he urged supporters to step up efforts to dethrone Sungai Siput incumbent S Samy Vellu.

"This is the focal point for Malaysians because the Indian community wants to see Samy out. The only ones supporting Samy is Umno Sungai Siput (division)," he told the crowd of more than 1,000.

anwar tour perak 050308 adil girlAnwar even addressed the Hindraf issue and explained to the Malay majority crowd that Hindraf was not anti-Malay but merely fighting for better economic conditions and education.

"What wrong with helping the Indians? They are opposing government oppression and the demolition of their temples. Shouldn't we help them?" he asked to which the more than 1,000 people replied with a resounding 'Yes'.

The crowd also welcomed Anwar's call for the five Hindraf leaders to be released from ISA.

Pak Lah not coming?

Unlike Anwar, Umno president Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his deputy Najib Abdul Razak have not set foot in Perak since nomination day.

anwar tour perak 050308 anwar with candidates gopengHowever, rumours have been circulating among journalists that the duo would be visiting the area to rally support for BN candidates in various "dangerous" seats.

The seats include Taiping, Beruas, Gopeng, Sungai Siput, Tapah, Ipoh Barat and Bagan Serai.

In the Kinta Valley, it was also observed that posters featuring Abdullah, which normally accompanied the posters of BN candidates in the last general election, were hard to come by in the Chinese-majority area this time around.

anwar tour perak 050308 anwar sg siputSuch posters are more visible in areas which have a substantial Malay voter base such as Sungai Siput.

Asked about the absence of posters featuring Abdullah in the Kinta Valley, MCA's Ipoh Timor candidate Liew Mun Hon did not provide a direct answer.

"The posters were provided by the national party headquarters. I'm sure they have their reasons. As a BN candidate, we work as a team. We have a manifesto that is drawn up by the prime minister," he said.

Opposition parties in the Kinta Valley have been attacking Abdullah's credibility as a leader and his alleged inability to keep corruption and inflation in check.

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