

Jubilant Anwar hails new dawn for Malaysia
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Fauwaz Abdul Aziz

PKR leader Anwar Ibrahim described the victory of the opposition parties in five states and its breach of Barisan Nasional's two-thirds majority in Parliament as "a defining moment" in the nation's history. MCPX

anwar ibrahim vk lingam hearing pc 290108 talking "The people have voted decisively for a new era where the government must be truly inclusive and recognise that all Malaysians, regardless of race, culture or religion are a nation of one," he told a packed press conference at his residence in Kuala Lumpur last night.

"The people have expressed in no uncertain terms that they want accountability, transparency and the rule of law," he said.

"Tomorrow, we start to build a brighter future hand-in-hand, shoulder to shoulder. This is a new dawn for Malaysia," he added.

Flanked by PKR deputy-president Dr Syed Husin Ali and party information chief Tian Chua, Anwar said among the first items on the agenda is to get down to the business of forming the state governments together with DAP and PAS.

This includes the issue of who will be chosen to lead as the respective chief minister or menteri besar of the various states now under the opposition parties, he said.

"Unless the party has an absolute majority, we will have to consult with our partners," he added.

Asked about whether PKR and its allies would hold any victory celebrations or rallies in the coming days, Anwar said its leaders and those of PAS and DAP have decided this would not be advisable "in light of the shock among Umno and BN members".

Up to BN to decide on Pak Lah

abdullah ahmad badawi election announcement 130208 confident On what he thought of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's future given BN's dismal performance, Anwar said the fate of both Abdullah and his deputy Najib Razak was up to BN to decide internally.

However, he said a large part of the reason for BN component parties' defeats is because of arrogance and the policies of Umno.

On his own plans given the expiry on April 15 of his five-year ban from official politics, Anwar said this was among the things he has to deliberate on in due time.

"Whether (or not) I will choose to run in May, I have to decide a bit later. Forming a state government is not a small matter," he said.

Asked how he feels, Anwar expressed a sense of vindication after a large portion of the people expressed their preference for the opposition parties.

"I feel vindicated, not by the court of law of 'correct, correct, correct,' but by Malaysians at large," he said in reference to the words uttered by senior lawyer VK Lingam in the 'Lingam tape.'

Anwar also said he was glad his wife PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail had emerged triumphant in her parliamentary constituency of Permatang Pauh in Penang.

Opposition now a credible alternative

A jubilant Anwar said the opposition now had to prove it was a credible alternative to the coalition which has completely dominated Malaysian politics for half a century. PKR won 31 seats for the biggest opposition presence in the new 222-seat parliament, from just one in the outgoing parliament.

Meanwhile, DAP won 28 and the Islamic party PAS, 23.

Anwar said the results exploded Malaysia's race-based political structure, under which parties have traditionally represented individual ethnic groups.

"The opposition that has been voted in is a truly multi-racial party. It is a fantastic setup," he said.

The biggest triumph of the 12th general election, he said further, was the feeling that Malaysians had overcome communal considerations, voted less on racial grounds but on issues of good governance.

Political comeback

He also dismissed worries regarding the lack of experience in governing among the opposition parties as well as fears that opposition victories would usher in a period of instability and conflicts.

"We have enough Malay leaders, we have enough Chinese leaders, and we have enough Indian leaders in the opposition fighting against corruption and poor governance. You can't have that (communalism) anymore. It's not relevant anymore," he said.

He also dodged questions on the many accusations cast against him by various quarters in the days leading up to the general election pertaining to his actions while heading the ministries of education, finance, and as deputy prime minister.

"You have these allegations, you have to substantiate that. I don't want to dwell on that. Not in victory. I will deal with it (such questions), if necessary at the appropriate time," he added.

The stunning election results yesterday has cemented Anwar's political comeback after being sacked and jailed a decade ago.

The performance has even revived talk of the charismatic 60-year-old as a future prime minister, after the lost decade that followed his 1998 fall from grace when he was convicted on sex and corruption charges.

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