

Anwar says BN MPs mull defection
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Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim today said he had held talks with a number of ruling coalition members of parliament interested in defecting after this month's landmark elections. MCPX

Anwar, a former deputy premier who was sacked and jailed a decade ago, helms a three-party alliance that made unprecedented gains in March 8 polls against the Barisan Nasional coalition which has ruled for half a century.

anwar ibrahim vk lingam hearing pc 290108 talking "People have come and approached me," Anwar said, adding that he had spoken with "quite a number" and told them their support would not be bought.

"If you want to surrender at a price, then you have chosen the wrong party," he told reporters, adding that they would be welcomed "if they accept our agenda".

Anwar confirmed he was canvassing support from coalition lawmakers in East Malaysia, which represents a power bloc that could unseat the government if it changed hands.

Barisan Nasional will have 140 lawmakers in the new 222-seat parliament, against 199 in the outgoing 219-seat parliament. The opposition alliance claimed 82 seats from just 20 previously, and four more states.

The opposition was today sworn into power in the last of the five states it now controls, including Kelantan which was already held by the Islamic party PAS, while Barisan Nasional was still trying to resolve its power struggles.

Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin from PAS was installed as chief minister in Perak, ending a public squabble among the three opposition parties who will rule there in coalition.

Fighting for political life

Abdullah is fighting for his own political life as he fends off calls for his resignation to take responsibility for the election debacle.

The premier has rejected the pressure to quit, and pushed ahead with the formation of his new administration, with a new slimline cabinet expected to be unveiled tomorrow.

abdullah ahmad badawi election announcement 130208 talking Abdullah has promised "new faces" and observers said the line-up will indicate his appetite for reform after the polls, which have transformed Malaysia's political landscape.

The previous cabinet had a whopping 32 ministers, 39 deputy ministers and 20 parliamentary secretaries, with jobs handed out to many of the 14 race-based parties that make up the coalition.

The large cabinet had been criticised as unwieldy and wasteful, and there is speculation that some ministries could be merged in line with the smaller Barisan Nasional representation in

parliament.

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