

A gathering to celebrate Anwar's 'freedom'
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More than 10,000 people are expected to participate at a mass rally in Kuala Lumpur next Monday for a long-awaited countdown to opposition figurehead Anwar Ibrahim's freedom to take part in active politics. MCPX

The rally, to be held on the eve of the lifting of Anwar's five-year ban from active politics, will take place at the Sultan Sulaiman Club in the Malay heartland of Kampung Baru in the city.

azmin ali interview 220307 clarify"The rally will signify the new beginning of his political career which allows him to be actively involved in politics and hold position in political party," PKR vice-president Azmin Ali told a press conference at the party's headquarters in Brickfields today.

Anwar is barred from contesting in a general election or party's election for five years, a result of his previous conviction under corruption charge. The ban will expire on April 15.

Although he is not allowed to take up a party position, Anwar is currently the de facto leader of the PKR which was formed after his unceremonious sacking in 1998 as the deputy premier.

The five-year ban imposed on Anwar has caused him to miss the opportunity to contest in the March 8 general election, but he is widely expected to stand in a by-election soon after the expiry of the ban in order for him to make a comeback to Parliament.

'Success of people's struggle'

According to Azmin, who is also the rally's organising chair and the Gombak MP, the April 14 rally's highlight will be Anwar's first public speech after the general election.

"He will outline the people's struggle for the near future," said Azmin, who added that Kampung Baru was chosen as it bears significance as being the place where the 1998 reformasi wave started.

anwar release full lingam tape 141207 anwar ibrahimPopularly known as the 'Black 14', such gatherings were usually held in previous years on April 14 to commemorate Anwar's conviction to six years' jail for corruption practice on the day in 1999.

Departing from the 'tradition' this year, Azmin said the upcoming rally would be to acknowledge the "beginning of the success of people's struggle and reform agenda by Anwar since 1998".

This include the release of Anwar after six years imprisonment in 2004 and the unprecedented election results garnered by the Anwar-led opposition parties in the March 8 general election.

"The results showed a major departure of previous political ideology where the younger

generation rejected political parties which play the racial card," said Azmin, referring to the multi-racial based politics championed by Anwar.

Issue of police permit

In a stunning electoral performance, the three main opposition parties - PKR, DAP and PAS - have jointly won 82 parliamentary seats and denied the Barisan Nasional's two-thirds majority.

The opposition, which have now formed an alliance called Pakatan Rakyat, is short of 30 seats which will then enable them to get a simple majority to take over the federal government.

On the issue of applying for police permit for the gathering, Azmin said they will follow the rule and procedures.

He however pointed out that the club is private-owned place of the Selangor state government.

The location chosen for the gathering - the Sultan Sulaiman Club - is also seen by many as symbolising Anwar's and PKR's rise to political dominance to overtake Umno.

This is the club where the first Malay Congress that led to the establishment of Umno, the dominant Malay political party was held on March 1, 1946. In its heyday the club - established in 1909 - was the hotbed for Malay nationalism.

Other leaders that are expected to speak at the event include Anwar's wife and PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and other PR component parties leaders.

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