

Anwar : we have numbers to topple government
Malaysiakini.com
Apr 15, 2008

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim last night said he has the support of enough defectors from the ruling coalition to seize power, although he will not act until he has a bigger majority. MCPX

anwar ibrahim april 14 kg baru event 150408 08 "Yes, we have enough MPs to topple the government," he told reporters after a rally to celebrate the end of his ban from politics, which was broken up by police.

"We are saying here for the first time that we are ready (to rule the country)," he said. "But we will only enter when the majority is comfortable.

"When we take over we want to initiate the move. Do we want to be a government with a two- or five-seat majority?"

anwar ibrahim april 14 kg baru event 150408 20 The Pakatan Rakyat opposition alliance claimed more than a third of parliamentary seats and five states from the Barisan Nasional coalition in stunning March general elections.

Anwar has said that government lawmakers from Sabah and Sarawak have approached him about switching sides, but so far none have declared their intentions publicly.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is floundering amid mounting calls to resign and take responsibility for the election results, which were the worst in the coalition's half-century history.

anwar ibrahim april 14 kg baru event 150408 11 "The situation in Malaysia is uncertain at the moment, people don't know when the prime minister is going and who will succeed him, so we will respond to this," Anwar said.

He said that rather than seizing government, the opposition's priorities are to consolidate its gains and work with Sabah and Sarawak lawmakers "who agree with our new Malaysian agenda."

"The priority now is to administer the Pakatan Rakyat states as incorruptible and financially transparent, fulfil our promises to the people and give meaning and essence to participatory democracy."

Minor scuffles

Earlier, his speech to some 20,000 supporters was halted by police who shut down the rally celebrating the end of his political ban, a decade after he was sacked as deputy premier and hit with sex and corruption allegations.

anwar ibrahim april 14 kg baru event 150408 01 "The police chief has asked us to stop so we are stopping, but remain peaceful because soon we will be running this country," Anwar told the crowd.

Witnesses said there were some scuffles between police and supporters as the crowd dispersed.

Political gatherings are strictly controlled in Malaysia, and police had threatened to break up the event, held at a private club in central Kuala Lumpur, because they said it was illegal.

About 300 officers including riot police, backed up with water cannon trucks, formed a heavy security presence, but the event went ahead on schedule and Anwar spoke for an hour before the authorities intervened.

anwar ibrahim april 14 kg baru event 150408 12Once seen as the heir apparent to long-time leader Mahathir Mohamad, Anwar spent six years in jail before leading the opposition back to prominence in the March elections.

The sex conviction against him was later dropped but the corruption count prevented him from standing for public office until Tuesday.

Anwar, 60, had been expected to re-enter parliament quickly through a by-election in one of the seats held by his PKR party, and to challenge Prime Minister Abdullah in a symbolic no-confidence vote soon after.

But in light of the stunning and unexpected gains, he has said he is in no hurry to act and will instead focus on building up the opposition.

Analysts: He's pouring oil into fire

Anwar has said that coalition lawmakers from Sabah and Sarawak have approached him about switching sides, but so far none has declared their intentions publicly.

"It is true MPs are waiting to jump. They will do it for money and power," said James Chin, political science professor with Monash University's Kuala Lumpur campus.

Chin said coalition MPs would defect because of the infighting in Umno and uncertainty over Abdullah's leadership.

"Abdullah is fighting for his political life and Anwar is pouring oil into the fire by stating that he has enough defectors to form the next government."

Tricia Yeoh from the Centre for Public Policy Studies said Anwar was highlighting his ability to form the government in order to "inject in people's mind that there can be an alternate government."

"My gut feeling says yes. He has been rallying support in East Malaysia. It will be risky for him to lie," she said, when asked if he had enough support to take power.

Yeoh said that under Abdullah, the coalition had no political direction.

"The Barisan Nasional is like a ship being tossed on the high seas. We do not know who is the captain."

Shahrir: No defection

However, Domestic Trade Minister Shahrir Samad dismissed Anwar's claims, saying he was not aware of any coalition lawmakers planning to jump.

"Not as far as I know," he told AFP.

Timbon Herbert Lagadan, a state assemblyman from Sabah, said Anwar's comments were merely "political rhetoric."

"I don't think he will get MPs from Sabah or Sarawak to join him," he said.

"Anwar is a man who cannot be trusted. He promised development for Sabah when he was deputy prime minister and finance minister but he failed to deliver."

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news//81373>