

Anwar to contest Permatang Pauh
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Syed Jaymal Zahiid

Anwar Ibrahim announced today that he will contest a by-election for the Permatang Pauh parliamentary seat which was vacated by his wife and PKR leader Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail. MCPX

Wan Azizah told a packed press conference at the PKR headquarters in Petaling Jaya this afternoon that she had resigned as member of parliament for the seat but will retain her post as PKR president.

wan azizah resign permatang pauh by election for anwar 310708 07"I have officially submitted my resignation letter as Permatang Pauh MP to the House Speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia today to make way for my husband to contest as a candidate for Pakatan Rakyat in a by-election as soon as possible," she said.

"This is consistent with our goals towards securing a parliamentary majority and forming a new government within this year," she added, stressing that her decision was the right decision for Malaysia.

"Anwar Ibrahim has articulated a vision for Malaysia that has brought hope to the people. He has the experience and intelligence to reinvigorate our economy, and the charisma and integrity to unite the Malaysian people and restore credibility to our institutions of governance."

permatang pauh election results 310708Wan Azizah said the people in Permatang Pauh have a special affinity for Anwar, who was their elected representative prior to his sacking as deputy premier and subsequent arrest a decade ago.

"I thank Wan Azizah for stepping down as the member of parliament for Permatang Pauh. The decision was not easy," said Anwar, who sat next to his wife at the press conference.

According to Anwar, other Pakatan leaders such as DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang have expressed their full support for him to contest in Permatang Pauh.

Asked why he opted for this constituency, the opposition stalwart said this was because Permatang Pauh is his "original seat" and also because his wife has always been committed to relinquishing the seat once he is legally eligible to participate in active politics.

"But some leaders of PKR like Selangor Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim (Bandar Tun Razak) did offer me his seat as well as party vice-president Azmin Ali (Gombak)," he added.

End of the road for Wan Azizah

When suggested by a journalist that the constituency was chosen because it is a seat that can ensure an easy victory for him, Anwar smiled and agreed.

wan azizah resign permatang pauh by election for anwar 310708 06"And tell Umno this," he quipped, drawing laughter from the PKR leaders present at the press conference.

Anwar - who is seeking to make a parliamentary comeback after a 10-year absence - has been shopping for a seat to contest after the expiry of a five-year ban from active politics.

The Election Commission will be required to call a by-election within 60 days.

Permatang Pauh was held by Anwar for 17 years since he joined Umno in 1982.

wan azizah wan ismail biodata 310708Wan Azizah took over as MP for the seat after her husband was sacked and subsequently jailed on charges of corruption and sodomy.

In the 2008 general election, she won the seat for the third time with a majority of 13,388 after defeating Umno's Pirdaus Ismail in a rematch.

Anwar had earlier said that he would contest the Kulim-Bandar Baharu seat if a court orders a by-election.

The High Court is to hear a challenge on Aug 19 asking it to invalidate the result in the seat won by PKR in the March 8 polls.

However, uncertainty over possible delays in the court decision was a key factor in Anwar opting for Permatang Pauh instead.

"Yes, I did choose Kulim-Bandar Baru but considering the bureaucracy and the delay and all that, we (his family and Pakatan leaders) decided to go for Permatang Pauh," said Anwar.

He also claimed that the court decision on the Kulim-Bandar Baru case may be deliberately delayed since the Barisan Nasional government feels threatened by his intention of contesting there.

In resigning her seat, Wan Azizah could be slapped with a five-year ban from running in another election. Her decision today will likely mean an end to her 10-year political career.

What sodomy charge?

saiful bukhari azlan anwar ibrahim sodomy allegations brickfields police station 040708
02Anwar was also asked what would happen if he is to be charged with sodomy in relation to the police report lodged by his former aide, Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan (right) on June 28.

"What charge?" he retorted.

"They have nothing to charge me with. They have been fishing for almost a month now and they haven't caught any fish yet. Maybe they would catch a coconut and assume it's a fish."

However, there are fears that he could be arrested.

"They may arrest him in the next 48 hours. It is aimed to prevent him from contesting a by-election," Tian Chua, PKR information chief, told AFP.

The government responded to today's announcement by saying it did not fear Anwar's possible return to office.

"We are not worried ... we will face it ... he is not a threat. It is a democratic process, good luck to him," Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar told reporters.

Syed Hamid confirmed that police have completed their investigation and have submitted their findings to the Attorney General's Chambers to determine if a criminal charge should be levelled against the PKR leader.

wan azizah resign permatang pauh by election for anwar 310708 02Even if he was arrested and charged, Anwar can still run in the by-election as he would only be disqualified if he was found guilty and slapped with at least a two-year jail sentence and/or fined more than RM2,000.

Present at the press conference to show support were also two of Anwar's daughters, Lembah Pantai MP Nurrul Izzah and Nurul Nuha as well as PKR deputy-president Dr Syed Husin Ali and vice-presidents R Sivarasa and Azmin Ali.

Other who were there included Cheras DAP MP Tan Kok Wai who was there to represent the party leadership.

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