

Anwar to kick off by-election campaign on Sunday
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Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim was set to launch his election campaign this weekend, despite the looming threat of arrest on sodomy allegations he has insisted are a political smear.
MCPX

wan azizah resign permatang pauh by election for anwar 310708 07Anwar is set to contest the by-election in the Permatang Pauh parliamentary seat in Penang that was vacated by his wife Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail after a turbulent decade.

"We will start the campaign programme this weekend. Anwar is heading to Penang to launch it," Tian Chua, his PKR information chief, told AFP.

Anwar is due to speak at the Permatang Pauh constituency at 9pm on Sunday in a rally to be attended by Penang Chief Minister and DAP leader Lim Guan Eng.

Earlier on that same day, he is expected to be in Klang to welcome former Wanita MCA deputy chief Tan Yee Kew and 1,000 of her supporters into his opposition PKR.

Anwar has said he decided to contest his hometown seat in Penang state as he seeks to return to Parliament after a 10-year absence, adding that leaders of the other two parties in the opposition alliance supported him.

"Nothing is going to stop Anwar's return to politics unless the ruling government cheats with the use of phantom voters and vote-buying," Tian said.

Kamaruzaman Mohamad Noor, election commission secretary, told AFP that the body will meet next Wednesday to fix the nomination and election date.

Tian said Keadilan expected the election to be held on the third week of August ahead of national day celebrations on Aug 31 and before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in early September.

Anwar's decision to contest a by-election came after his party said he could face imminent arrest on charges that he sodomised a 23-year-old male aide, allegations he has denied saying they are politically motivated.

He was jailed 10 years ago for the same sex charges before they were overturned, and was also imprisoned for corruption.

Anwar has called his latest accuser, Mohamad Saiful Bukhari Azlan, an "outright liar" who was working with others in power to frame him and block his plans to topple the government.

Formidable political foe

Tian said however Anwar's by-election bid could come to a crashing halt next week if police arrest him on the latest sodomy charges.

"I think they may act against him. But we hope the authorities will act in a fair and just manner," Tian said.

najib hilton hotel pc 010808 01Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak admitted Anwar remained a formidable political foe.

"We have to be realistic. It will be tough. We will do our best," he said. "We accept his decision. We will face him."

Najib said the government was unconcerned about Anwar's political comeback, despite the charismatic opposition figurehead's repeated public promise that he will topple Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's regime by the end of the year.

"The government is not threatened," Najib said.

Najib also denied the government has tried to destroy Anwar's political career and comeback with the new sodomy allegations.

"It is an accusation made by his own staff," he said in reference to the former aide-turned-accuser. "It is not made by the government," he said.

Anwar has said he will form a new government with the help of defecting lawmakers from the powerful ruling Barisan Nasional coalition.

A return to Parliament would be a next step in the political rehabilitation of Anwar, who was sacked as deputy premier in 1998 and later jailed on the sodomy and corruption charges.

Anwar was considered the heir apparent to then prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he was fired.

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