

Anwar braces for 'massive' vote-rigging
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Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim said today he was bracing for "massive" vote-rigging by the government to block him from winning a key by-election, which could propel him back to power.
MCPX

anwar ibrahim 02 060207Anwar will launch his election campaign later today in his hometown state of Penang, despite the looming threat of arrest on sodomy allegations - which he has insisted are a political smear.

The former deputy premier, who was jailed on sodomy charges a decade ago, got the chance to run for parliament in a special by-election when his wife announced last week she was giving up her seat in Permatang Pauh.

"If Umno-Barisan Nasional decide to (play) rough with massive funding and bribery, then we will have to be really prepared," Anwar told reporters.

permatang pauh election results 310708He said under "normal conditions" it would be easy to retain the seat, which was held by his wife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail - the official leader of his PKR party - for 10 years.

"That has been our base for a long time," Anwar said of Permatang Pauh, which he himself had held for 17 years when he was in Umno from 1982 to 1999.

"How rough they want to play and how is the Election Commission going to conduct the elections, these issues we are going to study."

"We are not taking it for granted," he added.

Imminent arrest

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has said the government will not prevent Anwar from seeking the seat, but authorities will investigate the sodomy allegations against him.

PKR officials have said Anwar could face imminent arrest on charges he sodomised a 23-year-old aide, Mohamad Saiful Bukhari Azlan.

"It is not a question of facts and law. The arrest (will be) a political decision," Anwar said.

He has repeatedly rejected the sex claims and called his accuser an "outright liar" who was working with others in power to frame him and block his plans to topple the government.

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