

**Why Permatang Pauh?**  
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**Ong Kian Ming & Oon Yeoh**

After trying to topple the Barisan Nasional government from the outside, de facto PKR leader Anwar Ibrahim has finally made the move to try to get back into Parliament before trying to form the next government.

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It is much more credible for him to woo BN MPs if he is a parliamentarian himself rather than just the unofficial leader of the opposition. And in choosing Permatang Pauh, he has chosen the best possible seat to make his re-entrance into parliament.

Kian Ming had previously written about why Anwar needed to contest in a seat like Bandar Tun Razak instead of a seat like Permatang Pauh. But this was written at a time when PKR only had one parliament seat, not the 31 which it currently holds.

anwar ceramah in rembau 150208 anwarThe previous argument for contesting in a seat like Bandar Tun Razak was based on the presumption that Anwar needed to spearhead a PKR attack into the mixed seats areas of either KL or Selangor. With nearly all mixed seats in those areas already under Pakatan control, that argument no longer holds.

The priority now, clearly, is to get Anwar back into parliament. He was eyeing the Kuala Kangsar seat but the opportunity to contest there never materialised because the courts did not overturn Rafidah Aziz's victory there.

He was also eyeing the Kulim-Bandar Baharu seat (currently held by Pakatan) but the appeal by BN to have the results there overturned is stalled in the courts. That leaves the option of having one of the current PKR MPs resign in order for Anwar to contest in a by-election.

Anwar stands a good chance of winning seats such as Bandar Tun Razak. It actually makes sense for Bandar Tun Razak MP Khalid Ibrahim to step aside to concentrate on his duties as the Menteri Besar of Selangor.

### **Accusations of nepotism**

But there is a better reason for Wan Azizah, the MP for Permatang Pauh to step aside. Nurul Izzah, Anwar's eldest daughter, is already the MP for Lembah Pantai. If Anwar were to contest and win in Bandar Tun Razak it would be the first time in Malaysia's electoral history where a husband, wife and daughter would be sitting in parliament at the same time.

Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng are father and son; Ong Ka Ting and Ong Ka Chuan are brothers; and Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Khairy Jamaluddin are in-laws. But there hasn't been a case of three family members in Parliament at the same time.

It would certainly open up Anwar and his family to accusations of nepotism, something he would right want to avoid. Wan Azizah, already a reluctant politician in the first place, is making the right move by ceding her seat which had been won and held by Anwar as an Umno MP for 17 years from 1982 to 1999.

Permatang Pauh is arguably the safest seat imaginable for Anwar. He is rightly seen as the 'incumbent' for this seat even though he has not contested it in the last three parliamentary elections. He is a local boy and would have home court advantage against BN's candidate.

percentage of seats in parliament 300408Furthermore, he would have the resources of the Penang state government behind him, not to mention the campaigning prowess of the Pakatan leaders in Penang, including Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng. Unlike in previous elections, when the entire resources of the BN are used to pummel the less advantaged opposition, especially in a by-election contest, the resources fight will be much more equal this time.

From a campaigning perspective, it would also be very difficult for the BN to attempt any large scale vote-buying in Permatang Pauh since this place is chock full of Anwar loyalists who would be more than willing to report such activities. And with the advent of New Media it would be very easy to publicise such activities.

One can also be sure that any unusual 'movements' of voters from outside the area would also be closely scrutinised. Vote rigging would also be nearly impossible since the ballot boxes at each polling station would be monitored closely by the representatives of each political party.

### **BN tremendously unpopular**

In addition, the whole by-election campaigning process will be one that will give Anwar and Pakatan further momentum. Unlike in previous by-elections, when leaders of various BN component parties could just traipse through the constituency and shake a few hands, smug in the knowledge that victory for their candidate is almost assured, this time they will be fighting in an area and under circumstances where they are tremendously unpopular.

It would be hard to imagine how much weight Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Ong Ka Ting would have in asking the non-Malays in Permatang Pauh to vote for an Umno candidate, especially after the recent revelations that the ruling party was willing to form state governments in Selangor and Perak with PAS, with little regard to the feelings of non-Umno BN component parties. One wonders how Najib, with all the troubles he has, will be able to help BN's campaign in Permatang Pauh.

najib pc in parliamnet on altantuya murder case allegations 030708In short, Permatang Pauh is a sure-win for Anwar. The ensuing whitewash would give him a much needed political boost. He would make a grand re-entrance into the halls of Parliament.

Once he is in, he would take his seat as the leader of the opposition and would enhance his image as the prime minister-in-waiting. The weakness of Abdullah and Najib would be reinforced publicly and among the MPs. This would also give him ample opportunity to lobby BN MPs to switch over to Pakatan.

Even if this does not lead to him being able to form the next government by say, September 16, his re-entry into Parliament would make it more likely that he does some of the things which we've recommended in the past – such as forming a shadow cabinet.

ONG KIAN MING is a PhD candidate in political science at Duke University and OON YEOH is a writer and new media analyst. You can listen to both of them discuss this topic in their Realpolitik podcast.

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