

Anwar asks voters to save country
Malaysiakini.com
Aug 14, 2008
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De facto opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has picked 'Merdeka' as the theme for his by-election campaign in Permatang Pauh, urging voters there to put him on the road to Putrajaya and save the country from tyranny.
MCPX

He told a crowd of about 10,000 people that it was 'now or never' to trigger changes for reform.

anwar ibrahim penang kg kota permatang pauh by election campaign 140808 13 "We want to save our nation from all wrongdoings, mischief and oppressive governance," said Anwar at a rally in Kampung Kota, one of the many small villages that dot the constituency.

A former deputy prime minister, Anwar is regarded by many Malaysians as having the best chance among all opposition leaders that have surfaced so far to get a shot at becoming the country's next prime minister.

His opposition alliance Pakatan Rakyat created history in March when it wrested five seats from ruling coalition Barisan Nasional, chopping down the latter's two-thirds parliamentary majority to a simple one. Anwar now plans to reverse that majority and take control of parliament by Sept 16.

"I am 61 now and have lost 10 precious years of my life. I leave the decision to all of you to decide whether or not you want me to initiate changes. I will accept and respect your decision," Anwar said.

But the bespectacled and slim-built leader, sacked in 1998 by ex-premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad on corruption and sodomy charges, is still dogged by scandal. He now faces fresh sodomy allegations, this time from former personal aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan, and if convicted he will be disqualified from holding office even if he wins on polling date on Aug 26.

Personal attacks and unfair tactics

Meanwhile, Anwar's political opponents from the BN are widely expected to leverage on the scandal to pull as many voters away from him as possible.

arif shah omar shah bn umno candidate for permatang pauh by election 140808 13 Just last night, the Umno-led BN coalition night named Seberang Jaya state assemblyperson Arif Shah Omar Shah as their candidate to counter Anwar. It has also finalised a two-pronged campaign strategy to attack Anwar both as a man and politician.

Anwar seems unfazed. He told the cheering crowd he has received information that a key medical report written by the government's doctor found "the boy (his accuser) had no leakage behind", thereby confirming his innocence.

"I challenge Umno and BN leaders to deny this," Anwar said, promising that he would run a clean campaign and not use character assassination to win votes.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng also criticised the BN, accusing them of resorting to personal attacks and unfair tactics.

anwar ibrahim penang kg kota permatang pauh by election campaign 140808 11 "BN lacks not only ideas, but candidates to fight Anwar," said Lim, whose DAP party is a partner in the Anwar-led alliance. "BN and Umno took so long to unveil their candidate and when they did, they had to choose an existing assemblyperson."

"Everybody in Pakatan Rakyat has to work hard to ensure our future prime minister (Anwar) wins and marches to Putrajaya (the administrative capital)," he added.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/87784>