

Cops boost security in Permatang Pauh
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Police said today they are sending 1,500 more officers to secure the electorate where opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim is running for parliament in a heated campaign.
MCPX

Huge crowds turned out to support Anwar on Saturday when he formally nominated to contest the Aug 26 ballot in Permatang Pauh, in his northern home state of Penang.

Both Anwar's PKR and the ruling coalition accused each others' supporters of heckling and shouting obscenities on nomination day, and two photographers were beaten.

Deputy police chief Ismail Omar said an extra 1,500 personnel would be drafted in to bolster the 3,000 officers already deployed in the constituency to maintain peace and security.

"We need the reinforcements because several incidents happened on nomination day," he told reporters. "With the additional personnel we can handle the situation come polling day."

Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar said action would be taken against those committing violence during the campaign.

"It is good to show support for one's political party but when violence, aggression and obscene language are used, it is not good for the country," he was quoted as saying in The Star newspaper.

PKR: Attackers were provocateurs

The two photographers were attacked by a group wearing PKR shirts, but party officials have said they may have been provocateurs planted by political opponents and that they were investigating the incident.

Anwar, a former deputy premier sacked in 1998 and jailed on sodomy and corruption charges, is aiming to return to parliament in the latest step of his bid to oust the government after March elections handed his opposition alliance an unprecedented five states and a third of parliamentary seats.

The by-election is also seen as a test of his popularity after a 23-year-old former aide, Saiful Bukhari Azlan, accused him of sodomy.

Anwar, who is the favourite to win the vote, has rejected the new allegations as a government plot and said the coalition was using "dirty tricks" to damage his chances in the by-election.

The outcome of the March polls has significantly weakened the administration of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who has agreed to hand over power to his deputy by mid-2010.