

Crowd shouts 'reformasi' as Anwar votes
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Hundreds of Anwar Ibrahim supporters shouted the opposition battlecry of "reformasi" as the PKR candidate arrived at a polling station in Permatang Pauh this morning with his wife Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, flanked by a dozen bodyguards.

MCPX

"God willing, I'm confident of winning," a cheerful Anwar told reporters after casting his ballot at 10am. "The people are extremely enthusiastic about voting. We are entering parliament with a clear agenda."

anwar ibrahim permatang pauh by election polling day 260808 01Victory would bolster his bid to seize the reins of political power in what would be a remarkable comeback after 10 years in the wilderness.

However, Anwar slammed the government's intensely negative campaign which focused on new sodomy allegations against him, adding that the results were likely to be skewed by electoral fraud and vote-rigging.

"This is the most sickening election. They attack me, saying I am pro-Jewish which is an act of desperation," he said. "We fear fraud. We are not happy with the ballot list.

"It's not Anwar versus the other candidate, it's Anwar versus the entire government machinery," he added, as a police helicopter circled overhead at the voting centre in Penanti, a stronghold of his PKR party.

anwar ibrahim permatang pauh by election polling day 260808 05Anwar, who was sacked in 1998 and then jailed, held the seat of Permatang Pauh in his home state of Penang from 1982-1999.

Security was tight with 300 police on duty at the Sekolah Kebangsaan Sri Penanti polling station, among a force of 4,500 who have been deployed amid allegations of misdeeds and attacks on supporters by both sides.

Anwar now faces new sexual misconduct accusations levelled by a 23-year-old male aide, which he says have been concocted by the government to thwart his ambitions of seizing power with the help of defecting government lawmakers.

anwar ibrahim permatang pauh by election polling day 260808 02Pollsters have said they expect Anwar to win, but that the government's no-holds-barred campaign may impact on his winning margin, which will be seen as an indicator of his ability to shrug off the sodomy charges.

However, Anwar has gathered huge crowds during the intense 10-day campaign, including a rally that drew tens of thousands last night.

Residents: We voted for Anwar

Roslie Ismail, a 37-year-old factory worker who attended the rally and then came to Penanti

to vote, rejected Umno.

"I will vote for Anwar, he represents the voice of the people. God willing, he will win," he told AFP.

permatang pauh by election 260808 voter wait outside01 "I have no more faith in Umno because there's corruption and abuse of power."

A group of three women in traditional Malay outfits and Muslim headscarves walked out of the voting centre smiling. Asked who they voted for, they said: "Of course, Anwar Ibrahim."

"Our grandparents, parents are all friends of Anwar's parents and grandparents, so we know all these allegations against him are untrue," said 42-year-old housewife Siti Ismail.

Despite the pundits' predictions, the governing BN coalition which has ruled Malaysia for half a century has said it believes its candidate Arif Shah Omar Shah has a good chance of winning.

"I think it is quite favourable (for Arif Ahah) based on the feedback from our polling agents," said Muhammad Muhammad Taib, Umno's information chief.

najib guan eng permatang pauh 260808 02 In a light moment, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and his father, Kit Siang, bumped into Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak at a polling station and the trio shook hands (left).

Polling booths are due to close at 5pm. Results of the votes from among an electorate of 58,459 eligible voters are expected to be known by around 8pm.

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