

## **Journalists muscled out from post-victory press conference**

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**Beh Lih Yi**

The post-victory press conference of PKR's Anwar Ibrahim at the Permatang Pauh by-election counting centre turned slightly chaotic due to the overbearing attitude of the Election Commission as well as the bodyguards of the victor.  
MCPX

The first blow for the journalists working on a tight deadline came when the EC refused to let Anwar to use the counting hall to hold a press conference.

anwar pc permatang pauh 01 260808 This then led to an impromptu press conference to be held in a spot outside the counting hall.

Immediately after the announcement of the results, Anwar had left the hall to address his supporters who had gathered at a field in anticipation of the election result.

After he ended the speech there, the media was informed to return to the hall for a press conference.

However, the group of about 100 local and foreign journalists later found themselves in an embarrassing situation when the EC officials asked - and even escorted them - to leave the hall.

PKR media coordinator Ginie Lim's attempts to make arrangement with the EC for a press conference to be held in the hall also failed.

anwar permatang pauh polling day 260808 13 The EC officials insisted that no press conference should be held there although the hall was the only suitable area for the media session to be held at the counting centre.

In the past, such as during the 2004 and 2008 general elections, all such post-victory press conferences were held in counting halls.

As he closed the door of the hall, EC deputy chief Wan Ahmad Wan Omar explained that he has to bar the entry of non-EC staff as the hall was still a prohibited area as it held ballot boxes of the just-concluded by-election (photo, above).

ballot boxes in polling center 260808 About 500 people, including the party leaders and media, were earlier present in the hall to follow the EC's announcement on the election results.

As a result of that, the group of journalists were forced to move outside the hall and the press conference was held at a small spot outside the counting centre.

### **The bodyguards with attitude**

And then came another barrier in the form of Anwar's bodyguards when journalists attempt to approach him for some comments.

Even the brief press conference was held under close watch of these security personnel.

The PKR leader has been escorted by a new team of bodyguards, resembling elite police officers, since the by-election campaign began on Aug 16.

Anwar and his bodyguard utk permatang pauh by election 230808 02Anwar had previously said that the need for the bodyguards was due to a threat to his life.

However many seasoned journalists had commented that these over-protective bodyguards were getting too zealous in their job of protecting Anwar.

For example, at the end of the press conference today, these musclemen had literally pushed aside journalists in their eagerness to to get him away from the spot.

Earlier on his arrival at the counting hall, the bodyguards had repeatedly attempted to keep the media away from approaching the opposition leader.

One of the bodyguards kept reminding the media not to "spoil the night" as he asked them to stop taking photographs of the leader.

But it was rather the attitude of these bodyguards and the EC's fickle-minded attitude in objecting for the press conference to be held in the hall that had actually spoilt the night for many journalists, who were there to perform their duty.

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