

**Pakatan moots Sept 16 public holiday**  
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**Athi Veerangan**

Anwar Ibrahim turned on the screws on Barisan Nasional with his Putrajaya crusade by announcing that Pakatan Rakyat-held states plan to observe the annual Malaysia Day on Sept 16 a public holiday and celebrate the day like their East Malaysian counterparts.  
MCPX

Speaking at a Permatang Pauh by-election victory thanksgiving 'Merdeka Day' dinner last night, the opposition leader said the public holiday would strengthen the solidarity between Malaysians in the Peninsular and those in Sabah and Sarawak.

anwar thanks voter speech at samagagah 300808.jpgWhile Aug 31 signifies then Peninsular Malaya's freedom from British colonial masters, he pointed out that the Malaysia Day marks the birth of this country with the merger of Malaya with Sabah and Sarawak.

"From this year, the annual Merdeka Day celebrations on Aug 31 will continue and culminate on Sept 16, Malaysia Day, with a grand celebrations in all Pakatan Rakyat states.

"We will show to Sabahans and Sarawakians that we are with them to rejoice the birth of Malaysia as an independent, united and progressive country for all.

"We will show that no one would be sidelined, isolated or discriminated under Pakatan Rakyat rule," the PKR de facto leader pressed home his message to some 2,000 people at the Seberang Jaya agricultural expo site, Penang.

He later said that he would bring the Sept 16 public holiday proposal to Pakatan-held states.

Meanwhile, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said his government plans to declare Malaysia Day a public holiday in the island state beginning next year.

Anwar added that should Pakatan take federal power, the coalition would make Sept 16 a national holiday.

An attempt to lure defectors

The Pakatan leader has set Sept 16 as the dateline for him to take over the federal government with a help from more than 30 defecting BN parliamentarians, especially from Sabah and Sarawak.

**BN now has 140 MPs against Pakatan's 81.**

anwar permatang pauh thanksgiving dinner310808 arrival.jpgAnwar announcement on the unprecedented Malaysia Day celebrations in the Peninsular is likely to further undermine the credibility of BN federal government and lure East Malaysian MPs to hop to Pakatan.

According to political observers, the announcement expressly implied that the federal government had ignored and neglected the importance of Sabah and Sarawak since states in the Peninsular do not mark the day with a public holiday.

They said it exposed the deeply-rooted grouses among Sabahans and Sarawakians of "being treated like stepchildren in the nation-building process by BN".

anwar permatang pauh thanksgiving dinner310808 speaking.jpg"Anwar is capitalising on it to show to East Malaysian political leaders that a Pakatan federal government would treat them equally.

"At the same time, he has embossed his position as the Pakatan supremo as well," said an observer, who declined to be named.

Anwar secured 31,195 votes last Tuesday to win the Permatang Pauh by-election with a thumping majority - which is more than the votes garnered by his nearest rival, BN's Arif Shah who bagged 15,524 votes.

Akim's Hanafi Mamat came third with 92 votes and lost his RM15,000 deposit.

Buoyed by his victory, Anwar has used his new-found credibility as parliamentary opposition leader to map out the opposition Pakatan Rakyat coalition's political destination.

### **Anwar has Sept 16 in sight**

Although he stopped short of making any statement on his much-vaunted Sept 16 takeover and the possible crossovers by BN MPs, Anwar's announcement intensified speculations of an imminent political drama in coming fortnight.

anwar permatang pauh thanksgiving dinner310808 leaders.jpgThe opposition leader claimed Malaysians were fed up with current ills of BN government caused by incompetency, corruption, abuse of power, the manipulation of legal system and a tainted judiciary.

Indicating that a Pakatan government would either abolish or amend draconian laws such as the Internal Security Act and release all ISA detainees immediately, he accentuated his belief in the rule of law.

The ex-ISA detainee stressed that even a terrorist suspect shall be given the right to defend oneself in the court of law, alleging the BN government of showing scant respect to "equality for all before the law".

anwar permatang pauh thanksgiving dinner310808 supporters.jpg"The Permatang Pauh verdict showed people want change," said Pakatan premier designate, hinting that he would heed their call.

Since swearing in as a MP last Thursday, Anwar has uttered little about his Sept 16 game plan and kept Malaysians guessing.

However, with his announcement last night, Anwar showed that he has his sights set firmly set on Putrajaya