

Anwar: We've more than 31 defectors
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Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim said today he had signed up more than 31 defectors needed to form a new government and called on Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi not to impose emergency rule to thwart a takeover.

"We have a slight majority, it is in excess of 31," he told a packed press conference held at 2pm in the PKR headquarters in Petaling Jaya.

anwar ibrahim pakatan rakyat september 16 announcement pc 160908 02Anwar, however, did not reveal the list of the lawmakers but had asked to meet with Abdullah to discuss a transition of power and was prepared to show him the list of defectors.

"We name them now and they get harassed immediately. So I'm telling you now that I will choose to confide in the prime minister.

"And if he wants the list I will show the list at the meeting. Until the right opportune moment, we can't declare. We know how the system operates," said Anwar.

Abdullah has rejected Anwar's claims as "political lies" and ruled out resigning, but the opposition leader urged him to accept a peaceful handover.

The prime minister did not rule out a meeting earlier today, but his spokesman Kamal Khalid said it was unlikely.

"I doubt very much he will be meeting with Anwar," he told AFP.

However, Abdullah said in his constituency of Kepala Batas this afternoon that he would not entertain Anwar's request to meet him until the list of defectors is made public.

Ministers are on the list too

Anwar urged the government not to arrest his new ministers under draconian Internal Security Act, or declare a state of emergency in an attempt to prevent him from seizing power.

anwar ibrahim pakatan rakyat september 16 announcement pc 160908 05His Pakatan Rakyat alliance - made up of the PKR, DAP and PAS - now holds 81 out of the 222 seats in Parliament. Its rival, the Barisan Nasional coalition led by Abdullah's Umno party, currently has 140 seats.

To overthrow the Barisan, Pakatan would need another 31 MPs to join its camp for it to hit 112 seats, the minimum simple majority required.

Anwar also said that many BN MPs were keen to join him in forming a new government.

"It keeps increasing by the hour... seriously. I'm not joking. This morning, I received a signed note from another member. What do you want to know? You want to know if we

have the numbers. We've the numbers!" he added.

He revealed that these included cabinet members and their deputies.

The 61-year old Anwar, who has been in talks with a number of disgruntled backbenchers, also said he wants Abdullah's assurance the power transition could proceed smoothly.

Peaceful transition

Abdullah had last week shocked the nation by arresting three civilians under the ISA, which allows for detention without trial.

The move, which sparked widespread condemnation, was seen as a means to shore up his political standing within his Umno party and also as a warning to Anwar's Pakatan.

"We want a peaceful transition. We hope that Barisan (Nasional) will not put up emergency rule to stop MPs from going to Parliament or arrest (government) MPs or stop them from joining Pakatan Rakyat," he said.

"That's why we have taken a very soft, conciliatory option. I am not making excuses. We have the numbers. We can and are prepared to move. If after a few days there is no response, Pakatan leaders will meet and see what is the next course of action."

Pakatan leaders had yesterday sent a letter to Abdullah, requesting for a meeting.

anwar ibrahim pakatan rakyat september 16 announcement pc 160908 04 "We give the PM time to consult and act responsibly as head of the country to heed the wishes of the people," Anwar said.

"I believe he will meet and we will have to wait today or tomorrow. He is a politician under siege, so you can forgive him for sounding desperate."

"We are looking at a matter of days (for a change in government)," he added.

"We've not given any ultimatum to Abdullah. We've said it is of national importance, it is incumbent and urgent for any sitting prime minister to respond positively in the interest of the nation and not just to appease the upheavals and turmoil within Umno," said Anwar.

According to Malaysian law, the king has the right to accept and formalise any new government that can show proof of sufficient mandate in Parliament.

This means that Anwar can approach the monarch with proof that he has the support of enough MPs to be the new leader.

Alternatively, the king could order fresh general elections, provided the prime minister - either outgoing or incoming - recommends it.

And Anwar said that his first option was to discuss the takeover with the prime minister before going to the king.

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