

Anwar: GE13 a class war
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 28 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) will go into upcoming polls fighting a class war on behalf of the lower classes whom Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said were being held at the mercy of Barisan Nasional (BN) cronies.

The opposition leader told a crowd of more than 2,000 at a ceramah in Ampang, a former Umno stronghold, that PR was facing attacks in BN-controlled media because cronies of the ruling coalition feared cuts into their "obscene profits" if there was a change in government.

"This battle, this election is about the masses, the workers, the low-income earners against the rich cronies of Umno," he said.

"Every day I am attacked. Who is fighting me? Not Najib or Muhyiddin. It is the tycoons who fear their profits will be cut," the former deputy prime minister said, referring to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

Although he accused several Malaysian billionaires such as those who controlled the Genting and YTL groups, he zeroed in on tycoon Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar al-Bukhary's monopoly of the sugar and rice market.

"Am I glad Malays control certain facets of the economy? Yes, but not to burden others," the PKR de facto leader said.

"Under Syed Mokhtar, sugar prices are four times higher. You who support Umno, your family members in the paddy fields are being squeezed by your leaders."

Anwar's plea to voters comes after a survey conducted last month by independent pollsters Merdeka Center found that Najib's popularity had surged by 10 percentage points to 69 per cent largely on the back of 78 per cent support from households earning under RM1,500 a month.

The centre credited this largely to Putrajaya's RM500 cash handout to households with a monthly income of under RM3,000 under the Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia programme.

Najib's predecessor Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's approval rating was 71 per cent before the 2008 polls but BN lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority and four state governments.

Anwar (picture) also pointed out to the crowd last night that it was PR that fought for minimum wage and the abolition of the Higher Education Fund (PTPTN), which he said "burdened poor Malays and made them beggars".

"These young Malays earning less than RM800 a month who are supporting Umno... it is not Umno that is fighting for minimum wage, it is us. We want to cancel PTPTN, not Umno.

"We want to reduce fuel, electricity prices. But Umno says giving free water like Selangor will make the government bankrupt," Anwar added, referring to the PKR-led administration's subsidy of the 20 cubic metres of water to each household in the Klang Valley.

Najib has indicated that elections are near although his government's mandate expires only next year.

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