

**Anwar: More crossovers expected in Sabah**  
**Malaysian Insider**  
**August 12, 2012**  
**By Clara Chooi**

KOTA MARUDU, Aug 12 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim confirmed today that more notable Sabah Barisan Nasional (BN) personalities will cross over to the opposition camp in the coming months, adding strength to Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) growing influence in east Malaysia.

The Opposition Leader, whose fledgling PR pact has its sights set on wresting federal power in the coming general election, told reporters here that this will set the stage for a fierce battle with the ruling BN when polls are held.

"On whether we expect more (crossovers), my answer, of course, is yes," said a beaming Anwar (picture), who has publicly announced that the 13th general election will be his last shot at power.

The veteran politician was speaking today during a press conference after a function to welcome PR's latest political ally in the BN-controlled state - Senator Datuk Maijol Mahap, the vice-president of the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun and Murut Organisation (UPKO), a Sabah-based BN party.

Mahap is the third BN leader to leave the pact since last month. He was preceded by Tuaran MP Datuk Seri Wilfred Mojilip Bumburing, his former deputy president in UPKO, and Beaufort MP Datuk Seri Lajim Ukin, a former federal deputy minister and Umno supreme council member.

Anwar described the trio as a "catalyst for change" in Sabah, saying their departures would likely impact the state's political landscape as well as the country's.

Federal seats in BN's "fixed deposit" states of Sabah and Sarawak are deemed crucial for the ruling pact to maintain its hold over Putrajaya.

In Election 2008, BN lost its customary two-thirds parliamentary majority due to significant losses in the peninsula, where it won just 85 seats while the opposition swept 80 seats.

BN's saving grace was in Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan where the coalition trounce the opposition and made a near-clean sweep, winning 55 parliamentary seats to the opposition's two.

"We are proud to accept these leaders into our fold.

"I believe they have brought with them a strong ray of support and you can see how the enthusiasm on the ground is... you can sense it in Tuaran, Beaufort and now, Kota Marudu... it is unprecedented," Anwar said.

"So I think the landscape in Sabah has changed dramatically and this will have a big impact on the national scene," he added.

BN's support in Sabah, primarily among the state's non-Malay voters such as those from the Kadazandusun and Murut, and Chinese communities, has been seen to be slipping, largely due to anger over the state's burgeoning population of illegal immigrants.

The Najib administration has finally set up a Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) to probe the issue, which is key among the reasons behind Mahap, Bumburing and Lajim's departures.

But opposition politicians and analysts believe that the RCI's investigation scope may not be satisfactory as the panel does not seek to identify those to blame for the number of illegal immigrants in Sabah.

Many have blamed BN and former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir for the problem, accusing the pact of unlawfully awarding citizenships to foreigners in exchange with votes.

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