

**In fight for KL, Anwar seeks working-class vote by railing against elites**  
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**By Syed Jaymal Zahiid**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 11 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim pitched individual taxi permits and other promises aimed at the urban poor at a small campaign rally last night before mostly opposition faithful.

The opposition leader told a rain-soaked crowd gathered at a football field in Bandar Tun Razak here that most permits were now held by cronies of his rivals in Barisan Nasional (BN).

“If you keep voting for Umno, MCA, Gerakan you will give the permits out to the cronies,” he told the crowd at the party’s official event to announce its candidates for Kuala Lumpur.

“But under Pakatan we will make sure those who receive the permits are those driving the taxi themselves... we can give it to an Umno division leader but only if he drives the cab. If you don’t we’ll take it back. That’s the only way to teach these types of people”.

Working-class support is crucial to Pakatan Rakyat’s (PR) defence of the city where it won seven of the eight seats contested in Election 2008.

The race to court the demographic has been intense with BN seen as winning over substantial support from initiatives like the RM500 cash aid under the People’s 1 Malaysia Aid (BR1M).

BN chairman Datuk Seri Najib Razak has promised to make BR1M a permanent feature of his administration should the coalition be re-elected with a stronger mandate and the amount could be increased to RM1,200 from the present RM500.

BN has also promised individual taxi permits.

Anwar last night called the promise a lie and accused BN of stealing PR’s ideas. He warned voters against trusting a government which was only pro-active in helping the poor when elections are near.

“When he unveiled his manifesto there was the akujanji (vow). If I make the akujanji it’s OK lah, I’m not in the government but you are the prime minister. What are you doing making pledges? Just do it lah,” he said.

A recent Bloomberg report suggested that pivotal to BN’s record losses in Election 2008 was the soaring cost of living sparked by a surge in global fuel prices.

Anwar and PR have been capitalising on anger over cost of living for campaign fodder, often highlighting the growing income disparity between the country’s elite and the bottom 40 per cent and at every ceramah held in urban areas including last night’s, he would play up the issue.

“There is a disconnect between the leaders of Barisan Nasional and the suffering of those below.

"Forty per cent of this country's population make RM1,400 a month while the small elites control much of the country's wealth," Anwar said, citing the wealth of tycoon Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary, among others.

PKR has said Syed Mokhtar's wide-ranging business interests, from sugar to a composites firm, will be a major topic in the PR election campaign, signifying who and what are the opposition bloc's targets if it wins Election 2013.

The logistics tycoon has been the target of almost every ceramah Anwar has given these past months where the PKR de facto leader has detailed how pervasive is Syed Mokhtar's influence and its effects on the economy.

Analysts believe the tactic will likely work in favour of the opposition especially to the more sophisticated urban voters.

Both sides have issued their centrist manifestos which analysts said targeted the low- to mid-income group, key constituents who could tilt the outcome of Election 2013 to either side.

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