

Anwar says votes not guaranteed despite huge ceramah turnouts
Malaysian Insider
April 29, 2013
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PETALING JAYA, April 29 — Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim admitted today that the huge turnouts at Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) rallies may not necessarily translate to votes.

The PKR de facto leader, however, said the large numbers could reflect some "measure of enthusiasm" that can be taken as a positive sign for the federal opposition pact ahead of the May 5 polls.

"Not necessarily, you are right there," replied Anwar when asked if he felt the crowd size at PR's nightly ceramahs could indicate growing support for the bloc.

"But the size of the crowd, it is clearly resounding. It will reflect some measures of enthusiasm because we don't provide buses, we don't provide free food, we don't provide RM20 allowance and some others do," he added.

PR's rallies in constituencies facing major battles have been drawing turnouts in the thousands, especially those featuring the bloc's top leaders.

One such example was the ceramah in the country's administrative capital Putrajaya on Friday where respected PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Nik Aziz took the stump before thousands of supporters

The mainly civil service electorate, their families and people from neighbouring areas filled an entire block of car park space behind the Palace of Justice, a crowd more commonly seen during carnivals and events held by the government.

The Putrajaya contest will see the Islamist party's vice-president Datuk Husam face Barisan Nasional (BN) secretary-general and incumbent Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Mansor, seen on paper as the favourite to retain the federal seat.

Ground reports also indicated overwhelming voter response to PR leaders campaigning in Johor, one of the frontline states key to PR's push for federal power, where rallies featuring the DAP's Lim Kit Siang have drawn attendance in the thousands.

Lim, seen as the underdog in the Gelang Patah parliamentary seat bout, will face the state's caretaker BN Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Abdul Ghani Othman.

Observers, however, noted that although the crowd size at opposition rallies may be something unseen prior to this general election, they may not necessarily mean guaranteed votes for PR.

But while Anwar concurred with their opinion, the opposition leader remains optimistic of his coalition's chances of winning this Sunday based on PR's own survey.

"Our assessment is based on the work on the ground, house-to-house campaign and the machinery," he said.

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