

Is Anwar Facing The Heat In Permatang Pauh?
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GEORGE TOWN (Bernama) -- "I'd rather watch football on TV than attend his ceramah," said Ahmad Azwan Bakhtiar, 25, when asked why he was not at a talk given by PKR advisor Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in the Permatang Pauh constituency which the latter is defending in the 13th General Election Sunday.

Ahmad Azwan was approached when he was with several other young people at a 'nasi kandar' restaurant in Seberang Jaya, watching the live telecast of a football match.

He said it was fun to listen to Anwar speak but he seemed to be repeating himself.

Anwar seems to have run out of capital for his speeches and is forced to repeat allegations, such as claiming that Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is a weak prime minister, condemning former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and making extraordinary promises.

In his ceramah, Anwar proudly tells the people that he will be the next prime minister and asks them to support his personal desire to helm the country.

"Today we win, tomorrow we form the government; when I become the prime minister, we will reduce the prices of goods, the prices of fuel" make up the gist of his talk wherever he goes.

One of Anwar's opponents in the Permatang Pauh constituency, Dr Mazlan Ismail of the Barisan Nasional (BN), seems to have what could be an edge. He was a PAS member for more than 20 years in Penang and had been the state's PAS deputy commissioner (2001-2005) and state PAS Youth chief (1986-2000).

The former vice-president of Telekom Malaysia is seen as someone who can give Anwar a run for his money. He has the support of people who were once close to Anwar and knew him too well.

One of them is Datuk Aidit Ghazali, deputy president of the Jalur Tiga (Jati) NGO. He said Mazlan could defeat Anwar.

"The voters of Permatang Pauh must make a comparison between Mazlan and Anwar to decide who between the two is better qualified to be their elected representative," he said.

The sentiment was shared by Dr Sidek Baba, who was also close to Anwar at one time when they were in the Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement (Abim).

Sidek had made some revelations about Anwar after making a study for about three years.

Former PKR Youth chief Mohamad Ezam Mohd Noor has also urged the voters of Permatang Pauh not to repeat their 'mistake' of giving Anwar a huge victory like in the 2008 general election.

Assoc Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian, a political analyst with Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), said there could be a change in the voting pattern if PAS members and supporters in

Permatang Pauh voted for Mazlan.

"However, it has to be seen how far the PAS supporters would go to vote for Mazlan," he added.

As for Mazlan, he feels that his experience as a state PAS deputy commissioner and youth chief are sufficient for the people to understand his character.

Mazlan, who is from Permatang Pauh, wants to create history in the 13th General Election and give fresh hope to the constituents in his bid to make Permatang Pauh progressive without too much of politicking.

The contest for Permatang Pauh is three-cornered. The third person in the fray is independent candidate Dr Abdullah Zawawi Samsudin.

Anwar won the seat in a by-election in August 2008, defeating Datuk Arif Shah Omar Shah of the BN and Angkatan Keadilan Insan Malaysia's Hanafi Mamat by a 15,671-vote majority.

Anwar's wife and PKR president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who won the seat in the 2008 general election with a 13,398-vote majority, had resigned as the elected representative to pave the way for Anwar to contest the by-election and become an MP.

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