

## **Why is Putrajaya so afraid of Anwar Ibrahim?**

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Since late 1998, Putrajaya has been at war with Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The sacked deputy prime minister has faced two sodomy charges and one for the abuse of power, even spending six years in jail and now faces the prospect of more prison time.

And yesterday, local business station BFM's interview with him about the Kajang by-election was not allowed to be aired, ostensibly because it is a business station and has no business broadcasting politics.

So, why is Putrajaya so afraid of Anwar Ibrahim?

There are several clues to the fear that put the screws on three administrations – Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and now Datuk Seri Najib Razak – to make sure Anwar is not allowed more space which would enable him to capture Putrajaya.

And this can also mean that the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) might not even put up a candidate for the Kajang by-election, with the excuse that the by-election was triggered to solve PKR's problems in Selangor.

BN contesting the surprise Kajang by-election will also open up another front and act as a referendum on the ruling coalition's economic policies and management since the May 5 general election.

The fact that the Najib government had to scuttle a proposed toll rate hike for 14 highways in the Klang Valley has shown its fear that more people will shift their allegiance to Anwar's Pakatan Rakyat (PR) in the next polls.

Former finance minister Tun Daim Zainuddin has gone so far to predict in closed-door Umno meetings that BN could lose if a general election is held now.

The consensus is that Anwar will win the Kajang polls hands down, which would put him in the running to take over as the menteri besar of Selangor – Malaysia's richest and most industrialised state.

Making Anwar as menteri besar will help showcase PR's ability to run a state and provide an example of his leadership if PR was to capture Putrajaya, say analysts.

Right now, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng has proven his chops to lead a state but the senior leaders of PKR and PAS have not had the platform to show their abilities, they added.

Khalid has proven to be good, one analyst said but added, Anwar would be better both for the economy and politics.

Another reason for Putrajaya to shut Anwar down is the fear that he will now be able to use Selangor's RM3 billion reserves better than Khalid could ever do or for that matter, the BN government in Putrajaya.

"Malaysia needs economic leadership and there isn't much showing in Putrajaya now.

"Anwar as menteri besar can show the way and that frightens some BN leaders. The Kajang by-election could hasten their downfall," a prominent Malaysia watcher told The Malaysian Insider.

So, why is Putrajaya afraid of Anwar Ibrahim? Because all efforts to put him away has failed to douse his popularity and instead, has made him a better bet to lead the country.

"BN would be better off to focus on running the country than putting Anwar away. They have wasted 15 years on that to no avail except to make him look better.

"The sodomy appeal is their last chance now but it could be too late," the analyst added, referring to the ongoing Sodomy 2 appeal. - February 13, 2014.

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