

## **Anwar as Selangor MB will provide track record for next polls, says top analyst**

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A prominent Malaysia watcher has said that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim becoming the Selangor Menteri Besar could be a game changer for the opposition, as it provided him the opportunity to lead the state and a track record to pitch to Malaysians in the future.

Dr Ooi Kee Beng, the deputy director of Singapore's Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, noted that a successful Anwar could heap more pressure on the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak ahead of the next general election due in 2018.

"If he runs Selangor, then the policies carried out in the state can be used as track record come the next general election.

"If he has a good track record, from policy making to solving water problems, then he would have something to convince voters, he would have a track record worth talking about," Ooi told The Malaysian Insider.

Anwar, the 1970s student activist who joined the ruling Umno in 1982 and later rose to deputy party president and deputy prime minister, was fired in 1998 on sodomy and corruption charges.

"Otherwise, his whole political CV is just based on him being the deputy prime minister and finance minister in the mid 90s," the analyst said.

Ooi also noted that if Anwar takes over from the popular Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim, the parliamentary Opposition Leader would be able to resolve the feud between Khalid and Selangor PKR chief Azmin Ali.

"It's like killing two birds with one stone," Ooi (pic, right) quipped.

With racial and religious issues at an all time high in Malaysia's richest and most industrialised state, Ooi said the pressure would be on Anwar to resolve these problems.

Last month, the state's Islamic Religious Department raided and seized more than 300 copies of Malay and Iban language Bibles from the Bible Society of Malaysia.

To date, the Bibles have not been returned despite the 10-point solution endorsed by Putrajaya in 2011 allowing the Bible to be printed, imported and distributed nationwide with certain conditions imposed for the peninsula.

This was on the heels of protests over the use of the Arabic word "Allah" by non-Muslims, which Muslim groups insist is exclusive to Islam.

"It is a religionisation of ethnic differences, it will make compromises much more difficult. This is when national leaders are needed and Najib hasn't shown that so far. With Anwar coming in, the pressure will be on Najib to act like a national leader," Ooi said in reference to Najib.

A thumping majority may not be important for Anwar in winning the Kajang state seat, argues analyst Ooi Kee Beng. – The Malaysian Insider pic by Afif Abd Halim, February 7, 2014. He pooh-poohed DAP's national publicity chief Tony Pua's warning that opposition pact Pakatan Rakyat will become a spent force if Anwar loses in the March 23 Kajang by-election, pointing out the urban mixed seat is not a representation of the entire country.

"I think it's silly because Malaysia is not Kajang. Support for Pakatan is nationwide based on various reasons.

"He can't equate Kajang with the whole of Malaysia, not all Malaysians think the same."

At the same time, Ooi does not think it is important for Anwar to win with a thumping majority.

"As long as he wins, it is enough. We should not give too much credit to numbers because the dynamics of general elections and by-elections are different. The expression of people changes with times," he added. – February 7, 2014.

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