

**Umno veteran: Sodomy verdict alone not sufficient**  
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**Kuek Ser Kuang Keng**

INTERVIEW While BN leaders are proudly trumpeting that Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim's acquittal has proven that the judiciary is fair and independent, a former minister and Umno veteran begged to differ.

"That is not enough... but I hope it is a good start. It is a golden opportunity for the judiciary to put things right and all of us can sleep well," said Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, who is also deputy president of NGO Amanah, in an interview with Malaysiakini yesterday.

Soon after the announcement of the stunning verdict that found Anwar not guilty in his second sodomy charge, BN leaders and BN-controlled mainstream media have been trying to convince Malaysians that the judiciary, which is seen as subservient to the executive, has regained its independence.

NONE Surprised by the verdict, Abdul Kadir hoped the "historic decision" will be the beginning of a new chapter for the judiciary to redeem its image under the new chief justice, Arifin Zakaria.

Unlike his predecessor Zaki Azmi, who was an Umno legal advisor, Arifin is not affiliated with any political parties and is a "God-fearing judge", he said.

Hours before the judge delivered the verdict on Monday, Abdul Kadir visited Anwar at his house in Segambut and followed his entourage to the Kuala Lumpur High Court.

Asked whether the action reflected his support for Anwar, Abdul Kadir replied that Anwar is his close friend, and that he was "70 percent sure" that the latter will go to jail.

NONE "I have this weakness, I'm a very loyal friend... (former prime minister) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) made me very close to Anwar.

"So actually, he is a very, very close friend and I really pitied him when he had to go through all these things. I kept on seeing him even when I was still a minister," said the former minister, wearing his signature bow-tie.

Anwar will make a great PM

Claiming that he knows Anwar well, the 73-year-old Umno veteran did not hide his admiration for Anwar.

NONE "I think he has great, great leadership. He can be a great Malaysian leader. When he goes down to the kampung, when he talks to the kampung people, he is a natural, he doesn't have to put up an act or drama.

"He comes from a kampung called CheroK To' Kun, very near my constituency, Kulim; it is about 10km away. He is a real kampung man.

"If he has the opportunity one day to be the prime minister, I think he'll be a great prime minister. He naturally cares for the rakyat," he said.

However, Abdul Kadir evaded the question of whether Anwar could be a better prime minister compared to current Premier Najib Abdul Razak.

The veteran politician is now active in Angkatan Amanah Merdeka (Amanah), an NGO led by Umno Gua

Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

NONEAs the son of an Umno founding member, Abdul Kadir was active in Umno politics since the 1970s under the administration of second prime minister Abdul Razak Hussein.

He was appointed culture, arts and tourism minister in 1999 by Mahathir before being given the post of information minister by the fifth prime minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Currently, he is the Kulim-Bandar Baru Umno division treasurer.

He was a five-term MP for this constituency before passing the seat in 2008 to his brother, Abdul Aziz Sheikh Fadzir, who subsequently was defeated by Zulkifli Nordin of PKR.

Zulkifli later left PKR to become a BN-friendly Independent.

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