

Obama's silence over Sodomy II draws flak
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The Obama administration's silence over the trial for sodomy of Anwar Ibrahim drew flak yesterday from the Washington Post, second only to the New York Times as the voice of the liberal establishment in America.

In an article on the subject, the Post gave a cogent reason why the Obama administration's silence is myopic given its stated policy of engaging with the Islamic world.

In describing Anwar, 63, as the "leading advocate of democratic reform as an antidote to Islamic extremism", the paper, a must read for movers and shakers in the Beltway, held that the Malaysian Opposition Leader was a "natural ally of the US".

The Post described as "suspicious" the circumstances in which Anwar's accuser, Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan, 25, had come to frame his charges.

"Two days before the alleged encounter, the man said, he met with Najib; the next day he phoned the national police chief. Before filing his complaint, he consulted with a close friend of Najib's wife," said the Post.

"When the accuser finally stepped forward, two days after the supposed sex, doctors could find no evidence of sodomy."

NONThe Post said Prime Minister Najib Razak was being courted by the Obama administration as a useful ally in the fight against nuclear proliferation, and on Iran and Afghanistan.

According to the newspaper, Obama had not raised the issue of Sodomy II in a meeting with Najib when the latter visited Washington last month, a visit the Post said was hailed by Malaysia's pro-government media as an endorsement of Najib.

Apco's lobbying successful

This opinion of the paper provides oblique support for the theory that the lobbying of Apco Worldwide, some time communications consultant to the Najib administration, was useful in gaining the Malaysian PM a strategic assist in Obama foreign policy-making circles.

Anwar is being arraigned by the powerful rights and privileges committee for arguments he made about the role of Apco in speeches in Malaysia's Parliament in March.

The Post contrasted the Obama administration's silence with the attitude of the Clinton administration, whose vice-president Al Gore, had condemned the first sodomy trial in 1998.

The paper rounded off its report by calling Sodomy II an "ugly persecution".

Barack Obama's election to the US presidency in November 2008 was widely hailed as America's attempt to recover its stature in the world as advocate nonpareil of democracy and human rights after the aberrations of the Bush years.

But hardnosed observers of world affairs knew that the tests of whether he would drape US

foreign policy with the mantle of idealism or resort to raison d'etat when it is expedient remained to be seen.

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