

**Embattled leader speaks at 10,000-strong rally**  
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Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim spoke at a 10,000-strong rally tonight to fight back over allegations of sodomy that he said were orchestrated by the government to keep its grip on power.  
MCPX

Anwar, who spent six years in prison before a stunning return to politics in elections in March, has lodged a defamation suit over the allegations - the same charge that put him behind bars in this Muslim-majority nation in 1999.

anwar saiful bukhari sodomy allegations turkish embassy release 300608 13Now after a dramatic interlude holed up in the Turkish embassy, where he took refuge at the weekend saying his life was in danger, Anwar is coming out swinging at the government of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"We are now going on an offensive," said Saiful Izham Ramli, a member of the policy board of Anwar's PKR, which leads a three-member opposition alliance.

"Now we have a game plan," Saiful said.

**Anwar speaks at rally in Shah Alam**

Anwar spoke at a PKR rally tonight at the Stadium Malawati in Shah Alam where thousands of supporters turned up to listen the embattled leader.

Among others, he reiterated that the fresh sodomy allegations were politically motivated and intended to kill his political comeback.

He said he had proof that his former aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan was in contact with police chief Musa Hassan and Rosmah Mansor, the wife of Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak.

According to him, the allegation was a conspiracy hatched by those in Najib's office.

Anwar vowed to go on a nationwide roadshow to clear his name.

Prime Minister Abdullah's Umno helms a a national coalition that has ruled the country since independence.

But Anwar's opposition alliance made a surprisingly strong showing in March, grabbing one-third of the seats in Parliament and undermining the coalition's long-time hold on power.

Now that a ban on public office after his earlier conviction has expired, Anwar says he was poised to enter Parliament in a by-election when the government concocted the latest allegations by a 23-year-old male aide.

## **Allegations could hurt PM**

Analysts say the allegations could hurt the prime minister and actually help Anwar, a charismatic figure whose colourful political career has nevertheless long been accompanied by the tinge of scandal.

anwar ibrahim sodomy charge not the first time 300608"A large number of people do not believe the allegations, and this whole episode may have benefited Anwar more than it has damaged his reputation," said Ibrahim Suffian, a pollster from the Merdeka Centre.

Anwar was sacked as deputy prime minister in 1998 in the midst of the Asian financial crisis which heightened his power struggle with then prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Shortly after, he was charged with sodomy and corruption, and appeared in court with a black eye after a beating from the police chief.

The trial heard lurid allegations linking him with his driver, speech-writer and adopted brother, and a soiled mattress was hauled into court as evidence.

He spent six years in jail until the nation's highest court overturned the sex conviction, and he emerged in poor health and spent several years recuperating and working as an academic.

Now the 60-year-old has been planning a political comeback, looking to win a parliament seat in the by-election and gather enough defectors from the ruling coalition to be able to take over as prime minister.

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