

**Anwar vs Najib: 'Liwat meliwat'**  
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Just when we thought that the political situation in Malaysia could not get any more exciting – or sensational – it does. It seems every few days, there's a new twist in the political scene that has enthralled a nation.

MCPX

No one could have anticipated that hot on the heels of an accusation of sodomy directed at de facto PKR leader Anwar Ibrahim that a similar accusation would be directed at Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Rumours of a possible link between Najib and Altantuya have been circulating ever since the Mongolian translator was brutally murdered. What makes the statutory declaration by private investigator, P Balasubramaniam, explosive is his revelation that firstly, Abdul Razak Baginda had told him that it was Najib who first introduced him to Altantuya and secondly, that Najib had a sexual relationship with the woman.

The situation became even more muddled when just a day later, the PI retracted his statutory declaration and introduced a new one, which excludes all references to Najib.

Balasubramaniam's lawyer has told Malaysiakini that Balasubramaniam was contacted by the police soon after his press conference yesterday. He last saw his client after dropping him off at the Brickfields police station at 4.45pm.

anwar ibrahim press conference 030708 02On the one hand, one may ask why the PI chose to make his original declaration, only days after a sodomy allegation against Anwar. The fact that he appeared at the press conference with Anwar by his side only makes this latest accusation seem all too convenient.

But on the other hand, one could also easily say that Anwar always had this information in his back pocket and was choosing to play this card at the appropriate time. Perhaps Anwar did not do anything to compel or instigate the PI to make this statutory declaration but merely asked him to bide his time and wait for the right moment.

It's worth noting that the PI said that he made the original declaration under duress. He did not say who induced the duress.

### **Anwar winning the court of public opinion**

The truth behind these increasing convoluted accusations and counter accusations as well as the twists and turns will probably not be known anytime soon, if ever. But perhaps, truth is not as important as the perception it creates for quite often, perception is reality – at least for the masses.

What is clear is that Anwar now has the upper hand and that Najib's reputation as the PM designate is probably irreparably damaged.

At this point in time, it's public opinion which counts most in swinging the momentum

behind Anwar and against the government. According to a recent survey, most people do not believe the new accusation of sodomy leveled against him. Not only that, a majority of the public believes that the accusation is part of a conspiracy hatched up by the government to 'get' Anwar.

To make matters worse, once the sodomy allegations were made public, a photo of the alleged victim taken with an aide of Najib in front of his office was circulated over the Internet. Najib explained that photo away by saying that Saiful had come to his office to seek a scholarship. The fact that Saiful had a low GPA, however, raised quite a few eyebrows. How can you hope to get a scholarship when your grades are so low?

najib and saiful bukhari azlan Later, Najib even admitted that he had met Saiful in person because he wanted to tell him that he had been sodomized by Anwar. Why a normal citizen would even think of seeking help from the DPM on a matter relating to an alleged sexual crime is puzzling. And why Najib would give access to a normal citizen who claims to have been a victim of a sexual crime is equally puzzling.

And all this coming hot on the heels of Malaysia Today editor Raja Petra Kamarudin's statutory declaration that someone had told him about Najib's wife, Rosmah, being present at the scene of the crime.

Never mind that Balasubramaniam's statutory declaration has subsequently been retracted. We feel the damage has been done, and even worse, the public perception is inevitably going to be that the PI was compelled to say that he was compelled.

The fact that Najib hasn't given any indication that he would pursue legal action against the PI as well as Rosmah's refusal to file a lawsuit against RPK only heightens the perception that both of them have something to hide, or at the very least do not want to subject themselves to scrutiny in court.

In contrast, Anwar has been most persistent in going after anyone who even hints at the possibility of him being a homosexual. That includes jokes and puns made by politicians. He clearly wants his day in court.

Given the sequence of events and the nature of these allegations and statutory declarations, is it surprising that a majority of the public finds itself supporting Anwar?

### **Only temporary relief for Abdullah**

Najib's loss is Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's gain. With Najib on the defensive, there will be less pressure – especially from Najib's camp – on Abdullah to declare a firm timetable for passing the baton to Najib.

abdullah ahmad badawi pm mihaz halal convention 080508 01 But it's only a temporary relief for Abdullah, who is still an embattled prime minister. The threat of Najib might have abated but the threat of Anwar is still very much there, and growing stronger.

As long as a weak and ambling Abdullah continues in office without any hint of being able to enact substantive reforms to the system, public opinion will continue to weigh against him and the government.

And this will only give further fuel to the fires of discontent raging quietly among most

Barisan Nasional MPs, making the political environment ripe for Anwar to make his moves to topple the government.

You could say that statutory declarations have become the latest form of 'surat layang', but these letters have a name and signature attached to them. Of course, not all these modern-day 'surat layangs' will have the same impact.

For example, should Anwar's alleged victim make a statutory declaration in the near future, categorically stating that he was sodomised by Anwar, it will probably make no difference in terms of public opinion.

In contrast, RPK's declaration and the PI's declaration – and even his retraction just a day later – have already made their mark on Najib. The taint is there, the damage is done.

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