



PERDANA LIBRARY
PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION
NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

Newspaper	The Star
Date	10/1/2012

Anwar verdict surprises both sides

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's court acquittal stunned both sides of the political divide and it has got the political players scrambling to reassess the impact of the verdict.

DATUK Sen Anwar Ibrahim arrived at the Jalan Duta High Court yesterday morning convinced he was going to be found guilty of committing sodomy.

Two hours later, he left the court cleared of the charge of sodomising his former aide Saiful Bukhari Azlan.

The judgment left both sides of the political divide stunned - the two opposing sides had been equally convinced that Anwar would be pronounced guilty.

The Pakatan Rakyat side could hardly believe their ears after years of slamming the sodomy charge as a political trial and the proceedings as a kangaroo court.

You could see from the tweets flying out after the court verdict that they were stumped.

Even the man in the dock admitted he was surprised.

None of them had seen it coming. The Pakatan leaders were probably more shocked than their Barisan Nasional counterparts.

They expressed relief, proclaimed victory and congratulated themselves but stopped short of crediting the judiciary.

The Barisan supporters, on the other hand, had never doubted Saiful's accusations against Anwar and the decision is unlikely to convince them otherwise.

Their reaction fluctuated between disbelief and anger as they tried to absorb the implications of the outcome.

"The outcome was not what we expected but we accept it. We believe in the rule of law. We will uphold the law and respect the decision," said Sepang MP and Selangor Umno secretary Datuk Seri Mohd Zin Mohamed.

Love or hate him, it was Anwar's moment in the sun.

He was lionised by the media when he emerged from the air-conditioned courthouse into the humid mid-morning heat.

The speech he had prepared in his head about condemning the judiciary, the Government and the Prime Minister was no longer valid and he had to make an impromptu speech through a loud hailer held aloft by PKR secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution.

The court verdict was the top news in many international news networks and newspapers, which saw it as a positive move that was in line with Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's reform image.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad put it best when he said that Anwar would remain an issue whether inside or outside of jail. The ruling coalition would have been blamed had Anwar been found guilty.

But now that he has been acquitted, Barisan will have to rethink its plans and strategies in taking on Pakatan.

What was immediately clear, said UCSI academic and political analyst Dr Ong Kian Ming, was that Anwar would no longer be bogged down and Pakatan would not be distracted by the question of who will be the Opposition Leader.

"On the other hand, the sympathy factor is gone for Pakatan. If he had been convicted, Barisan would be under pressure because he would have gone on a nationwide tour to campaign and paint his opponents as cruel and unfair.



"Pakatan has lost some steam in that respect. On a more personal level, it is good for him and his family regardless of the allegations about his sexual orientation," Dr Ong said.

It is unclear at this point whether the prosecution will appeal against the decision.

Those critical of the outcome will certainly want to see that but some of Umno's younger leaders are fed-up with the way national politics has been distracted by Anwar and his private life.

"I don't think the prosecution should appeal for the simple reason that we need closure. This thing has been going on for far too long," said Kota Belud MP Datuk Rahman Dahlan.

Rahman said it was time for Malaysians to "press the reset button" for the country.

"I know the other side is claiming that the verdict vindicates Anwar. Actually, it has also vindicated the judiciary, the police and the Prime Minister and his government.

"The middle ground will see that. This is the opportunity to press the reset button and shift our focus to nation building," he said.

The actual impact of the verdict will become clearer in the weeks and months ahead.

"The silver lining here is that we can now put aside the dramatics.

"The two coalitions can now move on to fight on policy and delivery and this is where the Barisan has the upper hand," said social historian Dr Neil Khor.

Anwar arrived at his Segambut house - where more supporters were waiting for him - at around noon.

The PKR leader's shirt was crumpled and drenched with sweat.

His usual bouffant hair looked flat, the grey roots were showing and the bald spot on the back of his head was more evident than usual.

The lines on his face ran deep and he appeared tired despite the morning's euphoria.

It looks like Anwar is getting his second wind in the politics of post-2008.

It will be tough because he will be fighting a leaner and more realistic opponent.

The next general election will not be fought based on a court case over one man but over economic policies, political and civil reforms and the strength of Najib's initiatives.

The last four years have seen Anwar's reputation and credibility severely tested.

Doubts have been planted in the minds of ordinary people about his private life.

There are some who think that what happens behind closed doors is none of our business.

But there are also those who think it has everything to do with political leadership.

That will be one of his many challenges ahead.

Anwar spent the afternoon huddled with his top party officials in discussion.

By nightfall, his limousine was speeding towards KLIA from where he jetted off on another of his overseas trips, this time to India.