

**BN to suffer no matter the verdict in Anwar's trial, says Straits Times**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 7 — The ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) will come under attack whether or not Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is found guilty in Monday's verdict in the opposition leader's two-year-long sodomy trial, according to the Singapore Straits Times.

The Singapore daily said in an analysis today that whatever the High Court's decision, "there is likely to be some blowback for the Najib administration."

Anwar speaking at a ceramah in Subang Jaya on January 6, 2012. The country is eagerly awaiting the verdict of his sodomy trial on Monday. — Picture by Choo Choy May  
The analysis said if the PKR de facto leader is found guilty and therefore disqualified as a candidate in the elections, "the question then would be whether the judge denies bail pending an appeal, depriving the opposition of its most charismatic campaigner in the poll run-up."

It added if he is acquitted, "attacks against the government could be blunted" but "Anwar's supporters, who have maintained that there should never have been a trial to begin with, could claim vindication, setting off more discontent."

"How the trial outcome will impact public opinion will determine the election timing. We are hoping for the best from a set of not-so-pretty scenarios," the Straits Times quoted a senior Umno official it says is close to the prime minister.

It also quoted Ibrahim Suffian, programme director of opinion pollster Merdeka Center, as saying that "the Anwar issue is just one of many poles of dissent confronting the nation."

"So, no matter how this trial goes there will be a knock-on effect that is bound to hurt sentiment towards the government," he said.

Anwar is charged with sodomising his former aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan on June 28, 2008, an allegation he says is a conspiracy to end his political career.

The former deputy prime minister was freed from jail in 2004 after the Federal Court overturned a previous sodomy conviction, allowing him to lead a loose opposition alliance in the landmark 2008 election that denied BN its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament.

The Straits Times wrote today that the conduct of the trial has raised many questions from Malaysians.

"Pro-government commentators have consistently taken issue with Anwar's refusal to take the stand or be cross-examined.

"The prosecution has received its share of criticism too. Its introduction of conflicting testimonies from doctors, who examined Anwar's accuser for sexual abuse, and the handling of DNA samples by investigators have been roundly ridiculed," the analysis said.

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