

**Hours before sodomy verdict, Anwar tells supporters to keep the faith**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 9 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim raced across the capital city last night, spending his potential last hours as a free man making his final appeal to supporters to continue fighting for political reform before today's verdict in his sodomy trial.

The de facto PKR leader pledged to a crowd of close to 5,000 at the final stop in Kampung Pandan here that "Umno leaders may cage my body but not my spirit." It was his biggest crowd in his whirlwind meet with supporters in the capital city.

Anwar speaking at his ceramah in Kampung Pandan on January 8, 2012. — Pictures by Choo Choy May  
Leaping about a stage under the eye of dozens of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders such as DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng and PKR deputy president Azmin Ali, he called on supporters to "work hard as a team to save Malaysia."

"Save Malaysia from the rot. Save Malaysia from endemic corruption.

"We are nearly there. Umno tried to convince PAS to join. Then DAP. No chance. This shows they are scared," he said in his last public appearance before the Kuala Lumpur High Court decides his fate in the morning.

He seemed a grim figure when he turned up a half hour earlier at the Sultan Sulaiman Club in Kampung Baru, the birthplace of Malay nationalism.

Before a crowd of about 2,000 people, Anwar maintained his innocence of the offence, and his swagger.

"I am not guilty. I should be freed tomorrow," he announced shortly after his arrival, drawing cheers and the usual sloganeering cry "Reformasi".

Anwar, 64, is charged with sodomising former male aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan at a condominium in upscale Damansara Heights here in June 2008, a few months before returning from a decade in the political wilderness and winning back his Permatang Pauh parliamentary seat.

A section of the crowd who came to listen to Anwar at his ceramah in Kampung Pandan on January 8, 2012.

This is the second time he has been prosecuted for sodomy after being convicted in 1998 soon after then Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad sacked him from his post as deputy prime minister.

The Federal Court overturned the conviction in 2004, paving the way for him to lead a loose opposition pact to deny Barisan Nasional (BN) its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament and five state governments in the landmark 2008 election.

If found guilty, he could spend up to 20 years behind bars and effectively spell the end of his political career and his chance to be prime minister.

Earlier at home where Anwar and his family played host to some 300 supporters, they said: "We're all optimistic."

His eldest daughter Nurul Izzah, who has followed in her father's footsteps, said: "It's not easy. I can give you one thousand and one answers."

"But for me, at least we are comforted by the fact that the struggle goes beyond one man; it is about the principles he holds deeply and believes deeply in and it's about the independence of our judiciary."

Anwar's PAS ally from Kelantan, Datuk Husam Musa, however, summed up the sentiment of the crowd best at the Dewan Sultan Sulaiman when he told what they knew in their hearts.

"The rakyat's sentiment will be decided in the next polls," said the Kelantan state executive councillor.

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