

**Thousands gather for Sodomy II verdict**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 9 — Hundreds of people are still walking past a tight cordon of policemen at the Jalan Duta court complex this morning to join thousands of supporters gathering ahead of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's Sodomy II verdict, expected to be delivered shortly after 9am.

Supporters had begun thronging the courthouse from as early as 5am, some huddling under umbrellas as the skies poured down a steady drizzle upon them.

People gather at the court complex despite the drizzle in the early hours of January 9, 2012.  
— Picture by Choo Choy May

Many were seen wearing Anwar Ibrahim face masks, while others donned black T-shirts with a variety of messages scribbled on them. Some carried plastic bags filled with light snacks and mineral water bottles.

Scores of blue-uniformed police officers are keeping watch nearby but the supporters are steering clear of them, doing well to ensure the rally remains peaceful, which PKR has promised the authorities.

Occasional shouts of "Reformasi" lift from the crowd as new pockets of supporters trudge up the small incline leading towards the parking lot where the group has gathered.

At one point, the group broke into the verses of "Negaraku" before breaking into more shouts of "Reformasi" and loud cheers.

According to Kedah PKR assemblyman Lim Soo Nee, the party's state chapter has mobilised 1,500 supporters while his colleague from Perak, Kuala Sapetang assemblyman Tai Sing Ng, said the party amassed a crowd of 3,000 people from the northern state.

While the mood appears optimistic, whispers from among the crowd, however, indicate most are expecting their opposition leader to be slapped with a jail sentence today.

PKR leader William Leong told The Malaysian Insider that a conviction was most likely despite the likely backlash against the Barisan Nasional (BN) administration.

"They (government) wouldn't do all this for nothing," he said, gesturing to the heavy police presence around the court complex.

Speaking through a loud hailer later, PKR vice-president Chua Tian Chang urged the crowd into cheers as he vowed that "Malaysians will rise to free Anwar Ibrahim... if the court disappoints the people today".

"As Malaysians, we will rise and we will free him, free ourselves... we will not rely on the judiciary, we will not wait for a corrupt system to give us justice," he said as those surrounding him erupted in loud hoots.

The Batu MP added that today's gathering was not merely a struggle to seek justice for one

man but for Malaysians in general.

He claimed the crowd of some 3,000 gathered at the court complex represents the remaining over 28 million Malaysians "who could not gather today".

"We gather to send a message to the leaders of our country — look around this world, there is no dictator who can rule forever.

"You can bully one man but the people will not remain blind. The people will determine this country's fate — not any judge or civil servant, not the BN leaders... only Malaysians can determine our fate," he thundered.

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.

This represents the second time he has been prosecuted for sodomy.

If found guilty, he could spend up to 20 years behind bars but will escape the caning penalty as he is over 60. It would effectively spell the end of his political career and his chance to be prime minister.

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