

Decision reflects judiciary's independence, say 3 nations
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KUALA LUMPUR: The United States State Department said the court ruling that acquitted and discharged opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim of a sodomy charge reflected favourably on the independence of the judiciary.

"We welcome the closure of this long-running case, which we've followed closely," said a statement from the office of the department's spokesman, issued through the US embassy here.

It said the ruling presented an opportunity for Malaysians to focus on the future.

The High Court here had on Monday acquitted and discharged Anwar of a charge of sodomising his former aide, Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan.

The Australian government commended Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on his political reforms taking effect in the wake of Anwar's acquittal.

Speaking in Jakarta on Monday, an "absolutely delighted" Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd said the verdict demonstrated the evolution of the Malaysian justice system.

"I have met Anwar and this is a good result for him and the process of political liberalisation that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib has been leading for some years now.

"I commend (the prime minister) and his government for that process of liberalisation: open discussion, open engagement on difficult and sensitive questions.

"This a good decision by the Malaysian courts."

Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr Marty Natalegawa said: "Yes, this (the Anwar verdict) is simply an important result that we always see as an issue that the international community has been following very closely.

"It is, of course, in essence a legal process and, therefore, should be treated and approached in that manner. But it is no doubt an important decision, an important result and we have every confidence that the Malaysian body politic will be able to move forward following this decision."

European Union high representative Catherine Ashton welcomed the acquittal.

"This verdict shows the integrity of Malaysia's judicial system, which is an essential pillar in a democratic system.

"The high representative hopes that the matter will now be put to rest."

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