

## **Anwar radio interview ban counter-productive, egg on BN's face, say analysts**

**Malaysian Insider**

**Feb 14, 2014**

**BY EILEEN NG**

The latest move by Putrajaya to bar local business radio station BFM from airing an interview with opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on the Kajang by-election is counter-productive, and may cost BN crucial votes on polling day, analysts say.

It has also made a mockery of Putrajaya's denial that the Malaysian media is freer than ever before after Reporters Without Borders' 2014 World Press Freedom Index findings showed that press freedom in the country has dropped to an all-time low of 147 out of 180 countries.

Universiti Putra Malaysia political scientist Dr Jayum Jawan said that there were many avenues for Malaysians to access Anwar's interview and already, podcasts of the interview have been downloaded and shared on social media.

"People are angry and insulted. They are being treated as though they are not able to filter what Anwar says. The public can evaluate for themselves whether he is speaking facts or talking nonsense.

"It is not helping BN if they want to win the by-election," he told The Malaysian Insider.

However, Jayum believed it is the work of overzealous civil officials rather than ministers in an attempt to please the powers-that-be but this had turned out to be egg on Barisan Nasional's (BN) face.

The move to silence Anwar is also a sign that the ruling BN government is afraid of the opposition leader, which will further drive a wedge between the electorate and the government, said Dr Ooi Kee Beng, another analyst.

Ooi said the fear of Anwar was partly because the former deputy prime minister was the glue that holds the opposition Pakatan Rakyat pact and has the personality to enable Islamist PAS, secular

DAP and multiracial PKR to work together.

Anwar, he said, was an important factor in the development of Malaysian politics and coupled with the possibility that he might be the next Selangor menteri besar, it would elevate his status as a Malay leader with real power, away from his current position as a facilitator or power broker.

"It is not strange BN is shaken. Imagine Anwar with official power, even if he's not prime minister, becoming the menteri besar will be a game changer," said Ooi, the deputy director of Singapore's Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

However, Dr James Chin felt the ban has nothing to do with Anwar per se, but is part of an overall control of the mainstream media to prevent them from featuring any opposition leaders.

"Anything that is opposition-related, the government will try to control it in the mainstream media," said the analyst from Monash University Malaysia.

Anwar PKR's colleagues also denounced the ban, saying it was a clear indication of extreme intolerance and undemocratic conduct of the Najib administration.

"It shows their extreme fear of Anwar and Pakatan so much so that they can't see any other way to counter him except by silencing him," said PKR vice-president N. Surendran.

He said there was no reason to stop the broadcast of the interview as it was centred on current events. In any other democratic country, he said, the interview would be allowed to be aired.

PKR strategist Rafizi Ramli warned that the ban was a sign of things to come, where the media would receive "interference" from the federal government in an attempt to stop Anwar from reaching out to the masses.

"Should Anwar become Selangor menteri besar, there will be more media visibility for him since the state is the country's economic hub.

"Obviously, BN is going to be jittery because they fear once the public, especially the younger generation see Anwar, which is different from what has been portrayed by BN all this time, it would mean more support for Pakatan," he said. – February 14, 2014.

Hakcipta © 2013 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/anwar-radio-interview-ban-counter-productive-egg-on-bns-face-say-analysts>