

Anwar's jailing a setback for Malaysia, say global media
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The five-year jail sentence on Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is a setback for Malaysia and could result in a loss of support for the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN), say international media reports.

The Wall Street Journal called the verdict a "pyrrhic victory" for Umno, but said although BN succeeded in stopping Anwar's political career, it had damaged the country's reputation "as well as the fabric of society, and perhaps sealed its own fate at the next election".

It said Umno's "decades-long vendetta" against Anwar "brought discredit on Malaysia's government and political culture", adding that the two sodomy charges against the opposition leader had come at crucial junctures of his career.

Anwar has been convicted of sodomy twice, once in 1999 and again in 2008.

In the former, he was accused of sodomising his wife's driver, Azizan Abu Bakar, but was later acquitted and freed in a 2- 1 majority ruling by the Federal Court in 2004.

In 2008, Anwar was charged with sodomising his former aide, Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan, at an apartment in Damansara.

The High Court had in January 2012 acquitted Anwar, but this was overturned by the Court of Appeal in March last year.

In both cases, said WSJ, the allegations came as Anwar was poised to wrest power from Umno: in 1998, he helmed the "reformasi" movement while in 2008, his Pakatan Rakyat (PR) coalition won the popular vote and a bigger share of the Parliament.

The Economist meanwhile said BN now risked "becoming a mere shell for an Umno ever more beholden to Malay-nationalist forces", and warned of "a dangerous racial polarisation in Malaysian politics".

Commenting on racial tensions in the country, the London-based paper said although Anwar was "a political chameleon whose real beliefs are sometimes hard to pin down", he succeeded in leading PR as an alliance that bridged Malaysia's ethnic divides.

"(His) incarceration is a dark day not just for Malaysia's opposition, but for Mr Najib and the country itself," it said in its report.

On February 10, the Federal Court upheld Anwar's sodomy conviction, effectively ending his public office as opposition leader in Parliament and the MP for Permatang Pauh. – February 14, 2015.

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