

US, UK concerned with Anwar's sodomy verdict
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The United States and the United Kingdom have both expressed concern over the Federal Court's decision to uphold PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's conviction for sodomy.

In separate statements, officials from both countries said that Anwar's case raises questions about the independence and fairness of Malaysia's judiciary, and the country's rule of law.

"The United States is deeply disappointed with Mr Anwar's conviction following a government appeal of the original verdict finding him not guilty," said Bernadette Meehan, a spokesperson of the US National Security Council.

"The decision to prosecute Mr Anwar and the conduct of his trial have raised a number of serious concerns about rule of law and the fairness of the judicial system in Malaysia," Meehan said in a statement emailed from PKR's communication's secretariat.

"These concerns are compounded by the government's intent to expand its sedition law, which Prime Minister (Datuk Seri) Najib Razak had pledged to repeal, to prosecute government critics."

Meanwhile the UK's Minister for Asia, Hugo Swire also said that he was deeply concerned by Anwar's imprisonment.

"His case raises worrying questions about the independence of the judiciary and rule of law in Malaysia. As such, we have consistently raised our concerns with the Malaysian government," said Swire in a statement emailed to The Malaysian Insider.

Anwar starts his five-year jail term today after the Federal Court quashed his appeal against a conviction of sodomising former aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan in 2008.

Meehan said National Security Advisor Susan Rice had met with Malaysian opposition leaders in April 2014, where the latter delivered a message from the US President on human rights.

Meehan said the message was that countries who uphold the human rights of all their citizens – regardless of their political affiliation, ethnicity, race, religion or sexual orientation – are ultimately more prosperous and more stable.

"The United States and Malaysia have built a strong 'comprehensive partnership', and we remain committed to expanding our cooperation on shared economic and security challenges affecting our countries' interests in Asia and globally.

"In that context, we urge the Government of Malaysia to apply the rule of law fairly, transparently, and apolitically in order to promote confidence in Malaysia's democracy, judiciary, and economy."

Swire also said the UK encouraged Malaysia to recognise the importance of international confidence in its judicial system and to restore trust in its commitment to human rights.

"Malaysia is an important partner and friend to the UK. We continue to believe that the integrity of the rule of law is a key part of its success, as are the values of moderation and tolerance." – February 11, 2015.

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