

# Discourse fuels the country's progress, says Anwar

PETALING JAYA: Criticism and differences of opinion should not be seen through the lens of hostility, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Instead, he said it should continue to "sprout and lushly blossom into the pulse of a mature, progressive and sovereign nation".

As the Prime Minister, he said that he had consistently adhered to democratic principles including freedom of speech.

"I invite all to continue dialogue and discourse, finding meeting points, cultivating and building this country together, not only on the streets, but rising up, reaching out and mastering new grounds so that the country can move forward steadily and energetically," he said in a Facebook post.

Earlier yesterday, he said the Turun Anwar rally took place without his presence because he was not invited.

"Well, I was not invited," he quipped when asked by reporters whether he would be attending yesterday's protest.

At a separate event in Alor Setar, Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the government is committed to upholding the principles of the Federal Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech for Malaysians.

"But the main issue I want to raise is this - if the Opposition truly respects democratic principles, I wish to pose the question, do they want to act outside Parliament or inside Parliament?" he asked, as reported by Bernama.

DAP strategic director Liew Chin Tong, when asked about the rally, said for the sake of democracy, he hoped the country would have a constructive Opposition.

However, he said the Opposition now lacked clear direction and had not provided a constructive check and balance to the government.

Liew, who is Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister, said: "They need to decide whether they want to be a constructive Opposition in Parliament or if they just want to play up issues and sentiments.

"We hope the Opposition will be able to articulate policies, contribute to policy making and give good ideas."