

PM: DON'T ABUSE FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Govt's efforts to uplift Malays targeted by misinformation, says Anwar

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has issued a stern warning against the abuse of freedom of assembly and speech to spread falsehoods, particularly concerning urban redevelopment projects.

While reaffirming the government's commitment to upholding the right to peaceful assembly, he said protests should be based on genuine concerns, not misinformation.

"Do not misuse this freedom to deceive and spread slander, especially in the name of Islam and the Malays.

"We are working to uplift the Malay community, but some are driven only by envy and ill intentions," he said after officiating at the Singgah Madani programme at Restoran Nasi Kandar Liga Maju here yesterday.

His comments followed reports that Pas Youth was planning a rally against the urban renewal bill, claiming it would displace "minorities" and comparing this to the Palestinians' plight.

Anwar defended the govern-



Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

ment's efforts to redevelop urban areas occupied by low-income residents, many of whom were Malays.

"Our aim is to help poor residents living in old and dilapidated flats. Yet, some are protesting. Why?

"When they were in power, they made no effort to redevelop these areas," he said.

He added that the government would use the necessary legal provisions to ensure redevelopment projects proceeded.

"The welfare of the poor is our responsibility, and we will use the law to advocate for urban renewal," he said.

It was reported that the Housing and Local Government Ministry had identified 534 potential redevelopment sites in Peninsular Malaysia.

These include 139 sites in Kuala Lumpur, covering 13.4 per cent of the city's total area with a com-

bined gross development value of RM355.3 billion.

While the ministry argues that redevelopment is necessary to address deteriorating and poorly maintained buildings, critics have expressed concerns over potential abuse by powerful real estate interests, which could lead to overdevelopment driven by private profit.

There were also concerns over the welfare of existing residents, as those opposing redevelopment could face forced relocation, potentially displacing families and uprooting communities.

However, Anwar stressed the urban renewal bill had been in development for over a decade, with no plans to forcibly evict original landowners.

During the Prime Minister's Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat on Tuesday, he gave an assurance that the status of original land, whether Malay reserve land or any other classification, would remain unchanged.

On Thursday, he criticised detractors of the proposed law, questioning whether they would prefer urban Malays to remain trapped in poverty.

Citing the long-established Sri Perlis Flats in Kuala Lumpur, he had said many low-income Malay families continued to live in cramped, one-bedroom units, despite the country's economic progress.

Anwar also vowed to take to the streets himself if necessary to counter any protests against urban redevelopment efforts.