PM: Don't abuse freedom to rally to spread misinformation

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PUTRAJAYA: Do not use the freedom to protest to spread misinformation in the name of Islam and the Malays, warns Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in response to PAS' plan to stage a rally against the Urban Renewal Act (URA).

Accusing the Islamist party of harbouring ill intentions towards the government, the Prime Minister said the URA is meant to redevelop impoverished urban Malay areas that have long been neglected.

"These areas, such as Kampung Kerinchi and the Seri Perlis flats in Kuala Lumpur, are run down and in dire need of repair," he said.

"We want to use the URA to help poor residents, the majority of whom are Malays. So why are you protesting? I want to remind you - do not abuse this freedom to lie and cast aspersions in the name of Islam and the Malays."

Anwar also expressed bafflement at the "jealousy and resentment" shown towards the URA.

"They have this sickness where they cannot see people doing well. They can't accept projects that benefit the Malays.

"They have never even set foot in Kampung Kerinchi or Flat Seri Perlis, where conditions are so run-down. We refuse to let the poor be sidelined," he said after an event to launch the Malaysia Madani logo at nasi kandar restaurant chains in Putrajaya.

Anwar said it is the government's responsibility to use the law to push for redevelopment in those areas for the benefit of the poor.

He previously explained in Dewan Rakyat that the proposed URA would revitalise dilapidated housing schemes, especially flats and apartment buildings, by lowering the approval threshold required from owners.

For example, if the building is less than 30 years old, then it needs 80% approval from owners and for those older than 30 years, it requires 75% approval for redevelopment.

Anwar assured Parliament that the URA will not alter the ethnic composition of residential areas, force property owners to give up their homes or lead to forced evictions.

Instead, he reiterated that the URA is designed to protect the rights of the original owners, regardless of race.

PAS and its allies in Perikatan Nasional, however, have opposed the URA, claiming it could displace poor urban Malays from their homes.

On Feb 26, PAS deputy youth chief Mohd Hafez Sabri said the party is planning to hold a mega rally against the URA.

Spreading the word: Anwar putting up a Malaysia Madani logo at the Nasi Kandar Liga Maju Putrajaya restaurant in Presint 2. With him is Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar.
— Bernama