

## GOVT POLICIES

# Criticism welcome, but don't cross the line

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The government welcomes criticism, but it must not cross the line into slander, threats or violence, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said Malaysians had every right to raise concerns about government policies, but there must be a clear distinction between constructive criticism and malicious accusations.

"The people are not wrong to voice their opinions, but don't use them as an excuse to burn down a leader's home or to com-

mit unlawful acts, because then the police must take action," he said yesterday in response to questions about the possibility of protests in Malaysia following unrest in Indonesia.

The demonstrations there began last month, fuelled by public anger over lawmakers' lavish housing allowances and escalated after a 21-year-old motorcycle rideshare driver was killed by a police vehicle during a protest.

The unrest has spread to multiple cities, sparking clashes with security forces and caused

widespread property damage.

Anwar said the government had addressed issues such as ministerial pay cuts, fuel prices and allocations for the people.

It was crucial to preserve peace, strengthen the economy and attract investment, he said.

"Some say this amounts to restricting freedom. That is not true. If there is slander, such as accusing us of being Israeli agents or of supporting Israel, that is rude and immoral. Criticism is welcome, but don't confuse it with lies and insults."