

## **'Disheartening': Anwar laments weak reading culture**

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Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim urged Malaysians to read more, lamenting the nation's poor reading culture, which he said remains far from ideal despite ongoing efforts.

He said this reality is at odds with the aspirations of his Madani government, which he said is anchored on a deep appreciation for knowledge.

“Reading has not yet become a culture in our country, and to me, that is disheartening. When we speak of a Madani nation, it is one that is rooted in conviction and love for knowledge.

“How can we claim to love knowledge if we only rely on speeches, opinions... sometimes filled with insults, but not grounded in knowledge?

“Reading just four lines or listening to two-minute rants on social media and forming conclusions, this world is challenging and it demands individuals with deep knowledge,” he said during his speech at the closing ceremony of the Kuala

Lumpur International Book Fair (PBAKL) 2025 today.

Also present were Higher Education Minister Zambry Abdul Kadir, Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek, Selangor Menteri Besar Amirudin Shari, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka director-general Hazami Jahari, and PBAKL 2025 organising chairperson Khair Ngadiron.

The prime minister, however, expressed optimism that a reading culture could be cultivated, noting that the PBAKL 2025, which began on May 23, had received an encouraging response, recording 1.8 million visitors.

Citing the success of developed nations, Anwar said such countries advanced because their people possessed deep knowledge and understanding.

“Look at developed countries, there are none that have progressed while lacking knowledge,” he said.

‘Discourse driven by anger, hatred’

Anwar, who is also the finance minister, said that efforts to elevate Malaysia as a great nation in the future must be anchored in building a knowledgeable society that values the reading culture.

He said that in the pursuit of success, there are still political leaders, professionals, technocrats, and intellectuals who overlook the development of culture.

“In the next five or 10 years, we want to elevate Malaysia as a great nation in our region, and to do that, we must be prepared to compete, to work, and to truly read.

“Just look at the political and economic discourse in our country... it is not based on knowledge or reading. It is driven by sentiment, anger, hatred, judgment... even religion is turned into a platform (for political gain),” he said.

As such, the prime minister challenged students, influencers, and parents to promote the strengthening of intellectual foundations to realise the goal of uplifting the nation’s stature.

PBAKL, themed ‘Buku: Membaca, Memimpin’ (Books: Read, Lead), concluded today, offering a wide variety of events and is regarded as one of the largest book fairs in Southeast Asia.

- Bernama

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