

'Boost halal market further'

PM: Leverage expertise to make Malaysia a powerhouse

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BUTTERWORTH: The halal industry holds immense global potential, and Malaysia must leverage its expertise and infrastructure to establish itself as a lucrative hub for the halal economy, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said the global halal industry, valued at about US\$1 trillion, could significantly boost the country's economy.

"During my recent visits, including to non-Muslim countries, they expressed interest in collaborating with Malaysia," Anwar said, citing Malaysia's strong reputation in halal certification as a key attraction.

As such, Malaysia must seriously enhance its capabilities and position itself as a comprehensive centre for halal industry activities, he said.

"This should extend beyond food and beverage to include Islamic finance, aligning with the principles of maqasid syariah (objectives of Islamic law)."

Anwar said sectors such as banking and insurance should adopt a more holistic approach and move beyond traditional associations of "halal" with slaughtering practices.

He said Malaysia should not only be known as the centre for halal certification but also be able to generate income for the country.

Anwar was speaking during the launch of the Penang International Halal Expo (Pihex) 2024 at Gravitas Jalan Baru here yesterday.

The four-day expo - themed "Empowering the Global Economy Through Halal" - saw the participation of 200 exhibitors, comprising local and international entrepreneurs, government departments and agencies, as well as banking institutions.

This is also the first time Pihex 2024 is being held in Seberang Perai, having previously been hosted exclusively at the indoor SPICE Arena.

The transformation of Pihex



Innovative ideas: Anwar listening to an explanation on semiconductors and electronic products while visiting an exhibition booth at the Penang Silicon Design @5km+ Initiative at Eastin Hotel in Bayan Lepas. Looking on is Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow (left). — ZHAFARAN NASIB/The Star

2024 allows all levels of society to participate, enliven, and further invigorate the halal industry in Penang.

Also present at the event was Penang Deputy Chief Minister I Datuk Dr Mohamad Abdul Hamid who is also Penang Islamic Religious Council president.

Earlier, Anwar urged universities in Penang, Kedah and northern Perak to introduce new programmes so the country will have enough engineers, aligning with efforts to make the country a regional hub for manufacturing industries.

He said this is vital in ensuring that universities can cope with the demand from the manufacturing industries to produce engineers for the future.

"Universities in the country must allocate necessary space for the semiconductor industries to produce more engineers for the future.

"They (universities) must allow the private sector to engage aggressively to elevate the country's manufacturing industries,"

he said during the launch of the Penang Silicon Design @5km+ Initiative at Eastin Hotel in Bayan Lepas yesterday.

He also said the country must move forward to elevate its status as a high-tech industrial centre and semiconductor hub, as well as design innovation.

He also stressed the need to increase the number of qualified engineers in the country and upskill them to meet the industrial demands in design and innovation in high-technology fields.

The Prime Minister highlighted the role universities need to play by working closely with the private sector and suggested that universities provide necessary space for the industry to engage more aggressively.

Expressing concern about bureaucracy and planning, Anwar noted "it could take an extensive amount of time" and that bureaucracy often delays the introduction of new disciplines and courses, which might take several months or even over a year.

Anwar also announced a

RM50mil allocation for the Penang Silicon Design @5km initiative programme.

He said the allocation was crucial to positioning Penang and Malaysia as a regional hub for the semiconductor industry particularly in global integrated circuit (IC) design and artificial intelligence.

The approved allocation will be spread over five years (RM10mil per year) and will help Penang boost its position as a key player in the global semiconductor industry.

The initiative aims at creating a unique and interconnected ecosystem for IC design and technology enterprises within a 5km radius of the Bayan Lepas Industrial Park.

Spearheaded by InvestPenang, this ambitious initiative will be supported by attractive incentive packages worth up to RM2mil annually for each company over a three-year period alongside the setting up of a governance structure to oversee project implementation.