

Keep from lagging behind

AI and digital tech offers opportunities, not job losses

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KUALA LUMPUR: Contrary to common fears, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies would not lead to widespread job losses, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim assuring Malaysians.

The Prime Minister said these advancements would instead provide unprecedented opportunities to enhance productivity and foster innovation across industries.

"History has shown that industrial revolutions and technological advancements initially sparked anxiety but ultimately created more opportunities.

"This is why training and digital literacy are critical in equipping our workforce for these changes," Anwar said in his speech when launching the National AI Office (NAIO) at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre here yesterday.

Also present were Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo, Transport Minister Anthony Loke, and Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz.

Anwar stressed that Malaysia must embrace digital transformation with "extraordinary speed" to avoid lagging behind.

He said the government, businesses and civil society must break away from outdated frameworks to achieve the nation's ambitious digital goals.

"We cannot succeed as a digital nation if we remain bound by old bureaucratic approaches.

"Rapid and decisive changes



Digital future: Anwar and Gobind visiting exhibits during the launch of the new National AI Office at MITEC in Kuala Lumpur. - AZHAR MAHFUF/The Star

are necessary to ensure our aspirations don't remain mere dreams in the digital realm," he said, adding that digital integration must extend across all sectors, including health, education and transportation.

Malaysia's ambition to become a high-income nation hinges on digital innovation, he added.

Anwar said the digital economy could contribute up to 25.5% of Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) within the next year, building on the current 23% contribution.

"Digital transformation is no longer optional; it is imperative for economic progress. "High income will only be achievable if driven by digital innovation," he said, adding that the government's decision to establish a dedicated Digital Ministry underscores this commitment.

The Prime Minister outlined the importance of collaborative efforts involving not just global tech giants but also Malaysia's own micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to build a robust digital ecosystem.

"Big companies like Nvidia, Microsoft and Huawei are contributing through R&D (research and development) and infrastructure investments.

"However, these gains will not translate into national progress unless our public servants and MSMEs adopt innovative solutions and actively participate in this transformation," he said.

Anwar also said it was important to bridge the digital divide.

He said initiatives such as the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint and MyMahir training programmes aim to equip 50,000 Malaysians with AI, program-

ming and data analysis skills by 2025.

He added that AI's development and use must align with Malaysia Madani's values, emphasising ethics, transparency and inclusivity.

"AI is not just about machines; it's about humanity.

"The principles of freedom, justice and transparency must be embedded in AI governance to ensure it serves the people equitably and fosters unity in our multi-ethnic, multireligious society," he said.

He urged collaboration between ministries and industry leaders to ensure the benefits of digital advancements are accessible to all.

"We must ensure that AI outputs reflect our unique values and perspectives, not just imported worldviews.

"This can only happen if we invest in local talent and infuse our cultural identity into digital solutions," he said.

Through these efforts, Anwar said he believes Malaysia can transform into a leading digital economy, bridging the gap between technology and humanity while maintaining ethical and inclusive growth.

The NAIO will collaborate with six strategic partners: Toshiba, Global AI Village, YTL, Microsoft, Google and Amazon Web Services.