



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim speaking at the launch of a two-day discourse to formulate a higher education strategy in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With him is Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambrzy Abd Kadir. BERNAMA PIC

DEVELOPING QUALITY HUMAN CAPITAL

Introduce new courses, PM tells varsities

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim wants the Higher Education Ministry to give the top management of universities more room to introduce new courses and programmes in an effort to produce skilled and quality human capital.

Anwar said this was to ensure that the higher learning institutions competed not only regionally but also on the global stage.

The ministry, he said, should act as coordinator to ensure that there were no issues, such as overlapping of programmes, among these institutions.

"With the rapid development in the country and around the world, I have proposed to Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambrzy (Abd Kadir) to provide more room and flexibility to the top management of universities.

"Challenge these universities to come up with better programmes in the next two years.

"If not, we will change the leadership," Anwar said in jest at the launch of a two-day discourse to formulate a higher education strategy here yesterday.

Present was Zambrzy.

About 500 representatives from the top management of higher learning institutions and stakeholders participated.

Anwar said he was aware of the constraints and challenges faced by the university senate and the faculties in coming up with better programmes.

He said although the government was facing constraints due to the debt inherited from the previous administration, higher education would continue to be given priority.

"We are in the process of reducing the country's deficit, improving governance and preventing leakages.

"Although we are facing financial constraints, allocation for education continues to see an increase. In fact, the allocation for higher education is among the highest in the 2024 Budget."

Anwar also called for Bahasa Melayu to continue to be used in teaching and learning at higher learning institutions without neglecting the importance of mastering the English language.

Citing Indonesia and Thailand as examples, he said although these countries were serious

about empowering their national languages, they also emphasised improving the command of English among university students.

"Therefore, let us not create a 'phobia' (of sorts) about mastering Bahasa Melayu.

"I am aware that there are some elite groups that have a phobia when we mention this (the need to have a good command of Bahasa Melayu)."

At a question-and-answer session, the prime minister said the government had no plans to introduce technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in primary schools for now, as it had its impacts and implications.

"Based on a report by a cabinet committee, it was agreed that the introduction to TVET would be after Form Three."

Anwar, nevertheless, urged for greater synergy between higher education and industry players in relation to the TVET sector.

This, he said, was to ensure that the country had sufficient human capital with TVET-related skills to meet the demand of foreign investors, thereby accelerating growth. **By Adib Povera**