

'ADDRESS FLAWS IN EDUCATION SYSTEM'

Failure to do so has led to Malaysia's poor ranking in Asean, says prime minister

ADIB POVERA
AND QISTINA SALLEHUDDIN
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

MALAYSIA must acknowledge the poor standard of its education system if it

is to move forward, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said failure by some quarters to acknowledge the flaws in the education system had hampered its growth and led Malaysia to become, by certain standards, the worst in Asean.

He said Malaysia's performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) 2022 was an example of how failure to acknowledge the faults of the education system in the past had affected its position in the global ranking.

"We cannot deny what we have achieved, which is significant... the (economic) growth, stronger unity and certain level (of improvement in) education (system).

"However, if we look at the facts, some of these are concerning. The latest Pisa report is a compelling case (of the country's) level of success.

"Out of 81 countries in the analysis, we are number 51, particularly in Science, Mathematics and English. Even among seven



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim visiting a booth during the launch of the Global Intellectual Discourse, themed 'The Next 100 Years: Vision 2100 for Malaysia', at Universiti Malaya in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, PIC BY ASWADI ALIAS

Asean countries, we are the worst of all."

He described the Pisa results as "disturbing".

"The standard excuse (given for the drop in performance) was because of Covid-19. But Covid-19 impacted all countries.

"We must ask how we failed. This is the question that we must ask before we discuss the future. We must know our state of affairs, we cannot be in denial," he said at the launch of the Global Intellectual Discourse, themed "The Next 100 Years: Vision 2100 for Malaysia", at Universiti Malaya here yesterday.

Present were Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir, Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil, Universiti Malaya Vice-Chancellor Datuk Seri Professor Dr Noor Azuan Abu Osman and the prime minister's wife, Datuk Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

Anwar also called on the Higher Education Ministry to do away with the "old bureaucratic system" of deciding priorities on behalf of universities and instead, giving them space to do so.

"I am suggesting this because of the urgency and recognising the fact that we will be left be-

hind in some areas (in the education sector) if we are complacent."

He also urged the ministry to implement clear policies and measures to allow the higher education sector to improve, including the expansion of certain programmes including artificial intelligence studies.

Anwar also said he had instructed Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek to review the preschool education system.

The Pisa report, he said, showed that Malaysia was left behind in terms of digital infrastructure, curriculum and facili-

ties for preschools.

He said preschool education reforms must be in tandem with higher education reforms.

"Let's say, there are 80 per cent (of pupils) enrolled in preschools under different categories.

"Of the total, 40 per cent are categorised as good, with the remaining mediocre and around 20 per cent are extremely poor. (This means) those considered as good do not reach 50 per cent.

"This is why I want to ensure that we can provide additional facilities this year to ensure that preschool (access) can be given to all children."