

# Allow varsities to make own decisions, PM tells ministry

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has instructed the Higher Education Ministry to put a stop to its old formal bureaucracy and making decisions on behalf of universities.

Speaking at the launch of the Global Intellectual Discourse 2024 at Universiti Malaya yesterday, Anwar said the ministry must provide space and allow universities to decide on their priorities and proceed with their programmes.

"I'm suggesting this mainly because of the urgency, and recognising the fact that some areas in the Pisa (Programme for International Student Assessment) report to me is very disturbing."

Anwar urged the ministry to implement clear policies and measures to allow the higher education sector in the country to improve.

He also encouraged universities to expand certain programmes, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI) studies.

"We don't have enough resources, but whatever is available must be done now as I told the ministry I want at least some measures, some forms of implementation to be taken now, this year... no excuse.

"We talk about AI, and although we have little funds outside the budget, start with one faculty. I would certainly encourage universities to expand the programme and probably allow some years to do a little more."

Anwar said he also wants a review of the country's preschool education system to prevent disparities in the communities.

"If we say that only 80% (of children) attend preschool, perhaps 40% of them are good, 40% are somewhat mediocre and about 20% are very weak. It means less than 50% are good.

"This means that in discussing justice, we are actually widening the gap between urban and rural areas, urban rich and urban poor, rural poor and remote poor." - Bernama