

'DON'T REPEAT PAST MISTAKES'

Privatisation without governance is piratisation'

CYBERJAYA: Privatisation that ignores governance and accountability risks becoming “robbery by the minute” or “piratisation”, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Speaking at the launch of Multimedia University’s Faculty of Artificial Intelligence and Engineering in Cyberjaya yesterday, Anwar said Malaysia must not repeat past mistakes in privatisation as the country embraces digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI).

Drawing parallels with the global wave of privatisation in the 1980s under then British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, he said Malaysia adopted the policy without proper processes, often handing major enterprises to politically connected companies.

“We sometimes forget that privatisation without transparency and due process means we only privatise to benefit cronies and families,” he said.

“Without good governance, the outcomes will only benefit a select few. For example, the privatisation of Malaysia Airlines was carried out non-transparently, costing billions, and only in the past two or three years has it managed to recover.”

He said poor governance meant many companies which were expected to benefit the nation and its people instead collapsed, forcing the government to absorb huge debts.

“What was the result? Many of these companies, initially ex-

pected to benefit the nation and its people, eventually had to be propped up by the government due to massive losses, becoming a huge debt burden to be borne by the rakyat.”

He said this practice, once described by former opposition leader Lim Kit Siang as “piratisation”, showed why principles of good governance must guide all reforms.

“That is why, whether it’s computerisation, digital transformation or AI, principles of good governance must always be upheld.”

He said the reminder comes ahead of the 13th Malaysia Plan, where governance has been identified as a central pillar alongside efforts to “raise the ceiling” of economic growth and “raise the floor” of inclusivity.

“We must raise the ceiling by enhancing the nation’s technological capacity, while at the same time raise the floor so that ordinary people also benefit,” he said.

Anwar said without governance, efforts in digitalisation and AI risked widening inequality and fuelling corruption.

Referring to management guru Peter Drucker, he said in some cases, government-run entities could outperform privatised ones if integrity and accountability were upheld.

“Privatisation is not a mystical law. Without proper governance, sound policies and a culture of integrity, it becomes exploitation rather than reform,” he said.