

'Balance AI with human values'

PM: Use tech wisely to avoid being overdependent

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CYBERJAYA: Malaysians have to face challenges concerning the use of artificial intelligence (AI) head on by emphasising humanistic values and critical thinking, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister acknowledged that these challenges are present as the country begins developing and mastering AI.

He noted the importance of paying attention to human elements as Malaysia pursues this goal.

"We must not only focus on developing expertise, but also on nurturing values," he said at a Temu Anwar dialogue session held at Multimedia University yesterday.

"This way, our people will not fall into the negative side of technology, such as overdependence, but will always remember to include the human element," he said in response to a question raised at the dialogue.

A participant had raised concerns that students are becoming overly dependent on AI and asked how the government plans to ensure the technology is used wisely and still protect critical thinking skills.

To this, Anwar reminded that students have a responsibility to be present in class and to learn directly from their teachers.

"The way a teacher conveys knowledge is not the same as



Future on display: Anwar and other leaders at the launch of the Faculty of Artificial Intelligence and Engineering at Multimedia University in Cyberjaya.
- MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star

what an AI provides. This is something universities and schools must pay attention to carefully," he said.

To another question, Anwar said the government will consider giving out another round of RM100 one-off payments for students to deal with the rising cost of necessities.

He said the government will consider this request while planning for next year's Budget.

"We can take this into consideration in the Budget.

"But please understand that even though we are facing challenges now, the prices of fuel, noodles, chicken, eggs and sugar in Malaysia are still far cheaper compared to other countries," he said.

He added that cost of living issues are a constant worry and

that the government is doing its utmost to tackle the problem along with other challenges such as eradicating poverty.

At the Prime Minister's Department monthly assembly earlier, Anwar had called on the government machinery to remain vigilant against the "AI Productivity Paradox" in the implementation of the country's digital transformation agenda.

He said the paradox refers to situations where large investments in AI and digitalisation may not necessarily translate to higher productivity.

"I hope this matter is given special attention by the Digital Ministry, the Communications Ministry and department heads.

"We don't want to fall into a 'trough of disillusionment' due to assumptions made on massive

allocations for digital transformation and AI programmes, which will reach tens of billions of ringgit over the next five years," he said, Bernama reported.

The "trough of disillusionment" refers to a stage in the adoption cycle of new technology when early high expectations are not met, leading to disappointment, doubts and declining confidence before the technology matures.

Anwar also told the Digital and Communications Ministries to look into data governance and integration as well as IT and AI challenges.

The Prime Minister said studies by the United Nations University in Tokyo, McKinsey and JP Morgan found that only 3% to 7% of AI adoption led to real gains in productivity or workers' income.

He said this is worrying as the government's digital transformation and AI programmes are meant to boost output and productivity, but the "AI Productivity Paradox" shows that higher productivity and returns are not always guaranteed.

"I have asked the Chief Secretary to the Government and department heads to review this matter and provide an initial response within two weeks to a month.

"We must avoid the issues faced by major global corporations," he added.