

# Swift reforms for stronger English

## We'll be left behind if we fail to improve national proficiency, says PM

**PUTRAJAYA:** To produce students with stronger English proficiency, an overhaul of the national education system must be carried out swiftly, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar said outdated approaches to policy implementation must be phased out and replaced to ensure more effective execution.

He has called on the Education Ministry to promptly implement initiatives to enhance English proficiency among students, particularly in secondary schools.

"In addition to strengthening Bahasa Malaysia, it is (necessary) to provide a slight shift to ensure the mastery of English as a second language, especially among secondary school students.

"If we follow the usual projec-

tion, our decision is in 2023, (the policy) will be drafted in 2024 and finalised in 2025.

"Then we will trial it in 2026 and begin the initial stage in 2027, while only (in) 2028 we will try to implement it.

"This cannot continue anymore. It's (the) old (way of) planning," he said, Bernama reported.

Anwar, who is also the Finance Minister, warned that such lengthy planning would cause the education system to lag behind.

"I do not deny the complexities due to the system's intricacies and teacher training, but if we follow old methods, we will fall behind. That is the issue," Anwar stated.

He stressed the need for a shift in English proficiency among students, as previously agreed.

"Among the points I emphasised, besides strengthening Malay proficiency, is ensuring robust English proficiency as a second language among students, especially at the secondary level," he said.

Anwar urged the formation of a team tasked with brainstorming solutions and putting them in motion towards realising this goal.

"We must choose how to implement quickly. If not implemented swiftly, we will lose," he said.

He said this in his speech at the Finance Ministry's Monthly

Gathering here yesterday, which was also attended by Finance Minister II Senator Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan and Deputy Finance Minister Lim Hui Ying.

On June 8 last year, Anwar reiterated that the government has never wavered from elevating the status of Bahasa Malaysia, even while wanting Malaysians to master English.

He stated that mastering English does not mean the importance of Bahasa Malaysia as the official language should be neglected.

Additionally, the government plans to bring in English teaching volunteers from Singapore to help improve English proficiency in rural areas.

Meanwhile, Anwar stressed that efforts to reform any govern-

ment policies and institutions must bring significant benefits to the people.

"We talk about institutional reform for the people, (but) they do not see its impact.

"This is the problem that we describe as a disconnect between the policies and new initiatives, which we present with (the aim of) bringing direct benefits to the people," he said.

Anwar also praised the good performance shown by Khazanah Nasional Bhd, Permodalan Nasional Bhd and the Employees Provident Fund, thus far.