

Innovative, cost-effective clinical research needed: PM

BY HARITH KAMAL

newsdesk@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has called on Clinical Research Malaysia (CRM) to lead bold regional and local partnerships that deliver – innovative, cost-effective clinical research tailored to Southeast Asia's unique healthcare demands.

Speaking at the CRM Trial Connect 2025 conference in Bangsar yesterday, he cautioned against over-reliance on global pharmaceutical giants, warning that it could lead to soaring healthcare costs and place a heavy burden on both the government and patients.

"Our challenge is to ensure medical costs don't skyrocket. CRM has a major role to play and must build synergy with all research institutions.

"At the National Science Council meeting, I gave clear instructions – no institution should

work in isolation. CRM's effectiveness must come through collaboration with all national research bodies and universities.

"One of our key challenges is to stop healthcare costs from spiralling. The sector risks becoming a burden when big corporations put profit before patient access."

Anwar said every medical faculty must contribute to a coordinated national effort to deliver more impactful and inclusive research outcomes.

He highlighted Malaysia's growing stature as a regional research leader, noting that its clinical trial ecosystem now goes well beyond laboratories – having contributed over RM1.5 billion to the economy and created more than 3,000 high-skilled jobs since 2012.

"Malaysia's clinical research ecosystem now spans hospitals, logistics networks, data centres and centralised labs.

"Clinical research is no longer just about

science. It's a catalyst for job creation, technological progress and inclusive growth."

Anwar said the benefits of research must reach all Malaysians, not just those in urban or well-funded areas.

"The challenge is to ensure the vast majority benefit, not just top-tier facilities for the few."

He said Malaysia's current role as Asean chair reflects its commitment to positioning Southeast Asia as a globally competitive and interconnected hub for clinical research.

"But this progress must be matched by courage, tenacity and innovation, especially in these post-normal times," he said, referring to global disruptions affecting healthcare and technology.

CRM chairman and Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said Malaysia's international standing in clinical research continues to grow, with over 2,500 sponsored trials conducted across 260 sites nationwide

since CRM's inception in 2012.

"Clinical research is ultimately about people. It offers patients early access to life-saving treatments, often when no other option remain."

Dzulkefly added that Malaysia's research teams are gaining global recognition for their professionalism, ethical standards and capability to manage complex studies including early-phase and first-in-human trials.

He also paid tribute to clinical trial coordinators, calling them the "unsung heroes of the research ecosystem."

The conference also saw the signing of three MoUs between CRM and global partners Gilead Sciences, Kyushu University Hospital (Japan), and BP Healthcare, aimed at deepening international collaboration and investment in research.

The event drew over 1,000 participants from 140 organisations across Asia.