

History, culture bedrock of national identity: PM

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PUTRAJAYA: PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has urged Malaysians not to sideline history, literature and culture in the rush towards digital transformation, stressing that these remain the pillars of civilisation and national identity.

He said Malaysia's ambition to lead in artificial intelligence (AI), semiconductors and new technologies must be anchored in values, ethics and a strong awareness of history.

Anwar was speaking at the inaugural meeting of the National Historians Council at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre yesterday.

He said while the setting up of the council is an important step, it is not the first attempt to correct or straighten out Malaysian history.

"I do not want the National Historians Council to be seen as an early attempt to 'correct' Malaysian history. No. Many earlier works already supported this idea.

"Our role is to embrace all these strengths, to engage with all parties and then advise the government on what else must be done."

Also present were National Unity Minister Datuk Seri Aaron Ago Dagang, his deputy Saraswathy Kandasami and Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Johari Abdul.

Anwar voiced concern over declining reading habits and waning interest in history among the younger generation, warning that it is an unhealthy trend that could weaken Malaysia's cultural grounding.

While stressing that science, mathematics and engineering remain vital, he said technological advancement must not come at the expense of heritage and identity.

"We have our own culture and identity. These cannot be sidelined. History, literature and culture must be balanced alongside technology so that we do not drift down an unhealthy path."

Acknowledging the challenge of fostering historical literacy in a global environment dominated by social media and outside influences, Anwar said Malaysia must build a strong national narrative that resonates with youth and society at large.

He emphasised the need for more engaging approaches in schools, archives and museums to spark interest in history.

"Often, schoolchildren visit museums and exhibitions, but without educators explaining things in interesting ways their

> 'Malaysia's rush towards digital transformation must be anchored in values, ethics and strong awareness of the past'



Anwar, accompanied by (from left) Johari and Saraswathy, presenting the National Historians Council membership certificate to Prof Dr Poline Bala at the event in Putrajaya yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

interest is not cultivated. Simple pamphlets with pictures they can take home can also help."

Anwar said history should never be treated as a minor subject in a modernising nation but as the foundation of a civilisation rooted in knowledge, values and culture.

"Civilisation is not built on technology alone. It stands on culture, history and the

heights of knowledge. And the civilisation we build does not need to be New York's or London's but Malaysia's.

"Madani must ensure that our values and perspectives are lived and internalised. While we reach for the skies, AI and new disciplines, we must also remain rooted to the ground. The role of history is to keep us grounded."