

Screening test scrapped because of psychological effect, says Anwar

KUALA LUMPUR: The proposed diagnostic screening test for children before entry into Year One Under the National Education Blueprint is off.

The screening test, which was to begin with the 2027 school session, has been cancelled because it could have a psychological effect on children, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"The proposal was well-intentioned but it was felt that it could be discriminatory in nature," the Prime Minister said.

"This could lead to children being deemed unfit or less intelligent before entering Year One or preschool, which may have psychological consequences.

"Therefore, it is now scrapped. This was the Education Minister's

recommendation, and I agreed he said, according to Bernama.

Anwar was replying to Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman (Muda-Muar) during the Ministers' Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Syed Saddiq was among several MPs who had criticised the proposal in Parliament over the past week.

However, the Prime Minister said the absence of a diagnostic test does not mean that monitoring pupils' readiness will be neglected. Instead, teachers and parents should jointly bear the responsibility through continuous observation.

The National Education Blueprint 2026-2035, featuring the Malaysia Learning Matrix,

was announced by Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek on Jan 20.

Anwar said that despite calls to delay entry into Year One for six-year-olds, Malaysia cannot afford to fall behind global education trends, noting that 137 countries have already implemented similar policies.

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He also announced that an additional RM800mil would be allocated in this year's Budget to meet urgent needs, including the recruitment of 18,000 new teachers.

"At the initial stage, the Education Ministry suggested postponing this plan by another year. I took a different view. If we delay it by a year, our children lose a year.

'Today's generation is not the same as before. Generally, they are more mature, smarter and more perceptive. We should not rely on outdated thinking. What

matters is giving them exposure," he said.

Addressing school overcrowding, Anwar, who himself was Education minister from 1987 to 1990, acknowledged that congestion remains a challenge, particularly in urban areas.

However, he said the two-session school system could be considered for pre-school and Year One pupils.

Anwar said registration for the 2027 intake will run from Feb 15 to March 31 this year, while five-year-old children may opt to enrol in preschool beginning April 6, 2026.

"I strongly urge all parents to

register their children. We are offering flexibility because, at the early stage, we do not want parents to feel shocked or pressured. There is a one-year window to enter Year One," he said.

Anwar, who is also the Finance Minister, said the policy would increase government spending due to the expansion of free education to children aged five and six.

"That is why the Education Ministry, the Economy Ministry and the Finance Ministry are working closely to review all aspects, namely funding, curriculum preparedness and parents' response," he said.

Speaking in Semenyih later, Anwar said the quality of education must be a priority for all parties in efforts to make Malaysia a developed and more competitive nation.

He said progress was impossible without a strong educational foundation.

"If this country wants to elevate its standing and progress, the quality of education must be improved. Language proficiency must be strong - its own language (Malay), English, Chinese or Tamil must all be well mastered.

'Understanding of mathematics and science must also be

strong, including in artificial intelligence and new technology," he said when launching the Semenyih Public Infrastructure Development today.

"If it were up to me, I would want to make it mandatory (to enrol children at six), but the Education Ministry said to be patient. Fine, don't make it compulsory, but I want to push it.

"Let none of our children be left behind, so it is best for students to register (for Year One at the age of six)," he said, telling village heads and members of the Village Development and Security Committee (JKKK), to advise parents to do so.