

Education system needs to focus more on STEM, says PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has called for “adjustments” to the education system, saying there is a greater need to focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects and English proficiency.

This was in response to a question posed by American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (Amcham) chairman Antony Lee about how the government would ensure the next generation could compete in the global economy.

“In the past, there was not much need for emphasis on science and engineering or technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

“We cannot follow the ‘normal’ academic process we had in the past,” he said at a luncheon by Amcham here.

Anwar reiterated that there was a shortage of highly skilled workers, especially in the technical engineering sector, where 30,000 more engineers were needed.

He also said English should be enhanced in Malaysian schools as the language is a medium of instruction for advanced subjects.

Anwar said this was why the government had been pushing its dual language programme (DLP), which was aimed at improving English proficiency among Malaysian students.

The DLP allows primary and secondary schools to teach science and mathematics in English, on the condition that the schools have one Year 1 or Form 1 class teaching mathematics and science in Bahasa Malaysia, regardless of parental preference.

When asked about the health ministry's increased allocation in Budget 2024 and its priorities, Anwar said the main focus of the government's healthcare reforms was digitalisation.

During Budget 2024, Anwar announced RM41.22 billion for the health ministry, an increase of about 13.5% from RM36.3 billion allocated in Budget 2023.

The health ministry plans to implement digital transformation of the nation's healthcare within the next four to five years, said its minister Dzulkefly Ahmad in March.

Anwar said there would also be an increased focus on improving healthcare services in rural areas.

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