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### Anwar Urges Librarians To Nurture A Vibrant Reading Culture



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KUALA LUMPUR, June 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has urged librarians across the region to go beyond their traditional roles and take on the challenge of nurturing a vibrant reading culture, especially among the younger generation.

Speaking at the 19th Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians General Conference and Meeting (CONSAL XIX), Anwar said libraries must not merely serve as book repositories or aesthetic spaces, but rather as dynamic centres of knowledge, culture and intellectual engagement.

“A librarian’s role is not only to collect books and decorate them in glass cabinets. It is to turn the library into a vital resource to raise awareness and inspire readers,” he said when opening the event at the World Trade Centre here today.

The Prime Minister also emphasised that librarians must become effective guides in introducing readers to exciting content, as well as utilising technology and digital tools to reach a wider audience.

Also present were National Unity Minister Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang, National Unity Deputy Minister K. Saraswathy and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar.

The Prime Minister said that in discussing the concept of a MADANI nation and efforts to strengthen the economy and the state, the foundation must always be rooted in knowledge, a pillar upheld not only by schools and universities but also by libraries.

He further stressed the importance of making libraries welcoming and engaging spaces, citing that the history of great civilisations is often linked to prominent centres of knowledge, whether it was the famed Library of Alexandria, Bayt al-Hikmah in Baghdad or later institutions in the West.

At the same time, Anwar praised efforts such as the ASEAN Digital Library, noting that such initiatives reflect the region’s commitment to democratising knowledge.

He said libraries must adapt to changing times by not only offering books but also providing access to podcasts, films, e-books and other digital resources, as these have become essential tools for learning in today’s world.

CONSAL XIX is a triennial event that brings together 1,200 participants from across ASEAN member states and beyond, with 89 insightful papers presented by renowned speakers and experts from various disciplines.

Throughout the congress, a wide array of topics are discussed, including the emerging role of libraries in fostering inclusive communities, the contribution of libraries toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and strategies to expand knowledge ecosystems for marginalised groups, including persons with disabilities and rural populations.

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