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Setting the ground for AI learning

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I REFER to the report "AI basics to be taught at primary schools in 2027" (The Star, March 26). According to the Education Ministry, school curricula would include the "Fasih Digital (digital literacy)" programme as one of the seven competency modules that pupils must master.

AI is a method of making a computer, a computer-controlled robot or software think like the human mind. Exposing children to the basic elements of AI will help them learn how to define AI and look at the ways it is already being used in our everyday lives.

At the global level, the response to AI education for the younger generation is to develop an up-to-date curriculum based on their learning needs. Lower primary children are at a point in their brain development when they are more likely to attribute human qualities to artificially intelligent technologies like smart speakers and chatbots. They may even trust what an AI-powered device or tool is saying over the adults in their lives, including their teachers.

Just like teaching young children that the characters they see in their favourite TV shows are not real, teachers need to reinforce that understanding with AI-powered technologies.

For upper primary children, the focus should be on developing problem-solving skills.

Throughout the curriculum, students should be given opportunities to reflect on their own thinking and their expectations of technology that "thinks".

Teachers should start by helping their students solidify their thinking about what robots and AI are by identifying examples in their daily environment.

They then need to develop their students' intuition about how technology works through hands-on activities.

In addition, it is crucial to inculcate principles and ethical uses of AI to children from young to enable them to think about responsible use of technology.

Would infrastructure and teaching capacity at primary schools for AI education be sufficient by 2027?

Bringing AI to the education environment will require IT professionals to pave the way with the right infrastructure. Any AI system can only be as good as the fundamental technology that supports it.

All schools will need to make sure that their IT infrastructure, devices, software and secure digital data record-keeping are

as good as they can be to get the most out of the AI basics curriculum delivery.

This is especially true for schools located in rural areas where there is a gap in digital infrastructure capacity.

As the government plans to introduce AI into the primary curriculum in three years' time, it is essential to equip all schools with the relevant infrastructure and equipment.

In addition, it is of paramount importance to provide teachers with up-to-date training. Since everything will be new, teachers should also pursue further education to ensure they are prepared for any future curricular revisions.

The earlier younger learners are ushered into the world of responsible usage of AI, the easier it will be for them to comprehend how to use it for good.

Interacting with AI at an early age will equip them with an enduring curiosity for learning as well as advanced problem-solving skills.

But while AI technologies are wonderful, there are many risks and hazards associated with them.

The Education Ministry and other relevant government bodies and agencies must therefore ensure that regulations are in place to keep up with advance-