

Muhyiddin: Masks for students not compulsory
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The government is of view that it is not necessary to make wearing of face masks and daily taking of students body temperature in schools compulsory to check the spread of influenza A (H1N1), said Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, said the government had issued clear guidelines on the pandemic and as such, it was up to the wisdom of parents and the schools themselves on what action needed to be taken as they would know their own situation better.

He said the overriding issue was practising proper hygiene at all times and donning the masks when needed like in the event of coughing or sneezing so as not to infect others.

"If we feel our situation is safe, then it is up to our own judgement whether to wear the face mask or not. The question of making this compulsory I think is not necessary," he told reporters when asked why the two practices had not been made compulsory despite the fact that the death toll due influence A (H1N1) in the country had reached 73.

Earlier, Muhyiddin had spent about 10 minutes visiting candidates of the Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) examination at Sekolah Kebangsaan Bukit Damansara in Kuala Lumpur.

Muhyiddin said if parents thought their children should be supplied with face masks they could do so.

According to him, parents and the people-at-large now were more aware of the pandemic following the huge amount of publicity given to it by the government in and out of schools since several months ago.

"I also think the management of schools understand the situation better. Things are more in control now," he said.

Students given three face masks each

On the UPSR examination, taking place with the country facing the influenza A(H1N1) pandemic, Muhyiddin said the Education Ministry had put in place various measures to ensure no student sitting for the examination is infected by the H1N1 virus.

He said each student sitting for the examination is supplied with three face masks to last the three days of the examination while hand sanitizers was also being made available, at all UPSR examination centres in the country.

Muhyiddin also said the ministry had opened 24-hour operations rooms at the Malaysian Examinations Board office and at state education offices to monitor the situation on the disease during the duration of the UPSR examination.

According to him, only four UPSR candidates were affected by influenza A (H1N1), one each in Pahang, Sarawak, Johor and Negeri Sembilan and that they would be sitting for the examination just like the other candidates but at hospitals under the supervision of doctors

and examination invigilators.

A total of 518,096 candidates are sitting for the UPSR in the country this year. The examination which involves Year Six pupils is being conducted at 8,236 examination centres. Examination officials and invigilators number 32,924 people.

- *Bernama*

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