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Kids may start Year One at 5

KUALA LUMPUR: The government is mulling over plans for children to start school at the age of 5 instead of at 6.

Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the change would ensure that children received formal education at an earlier age, thereby contributing to their early mental growth.

He said in many countries, children began their formal education at 5.

"In this day and age, 5-year-olds are already intelligent, as many go to preschool.

"If that is the case, they should be old enough to begin formal primary education at 5," he said in the Parliament lobby yesterday.

If the proposal goes ahead, the government hopes to introduce it in stages by the end of the 10th Malaysia Plan, or in 2015.

"This won't be a problem in principle, but preparation is needed beforehand. If the idea is implemented,



Going to school at an earlier age can help nurture children's mental growth.

there will be an influx of 1.5 million schoolchildren in Year One compared with 600,000 at present.

"We will need to ensure that we have enough schools, teachers and facilities. Preparing ourselves for this plan is the issue now."

Muhyiddin was elaborating on one of the proposals under the 10th Malaysia Plan, which was tabled by

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak earlier.

Another addition is the introduction of "trust schools", or national schools to be adopted by the private sector as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Ten schools will be identified for this purpose. Five will be classified as low-performing schools, three will be

average schools while two will be high-performing schools.

Muhyiddin said the ministry would work together with the corporate sector in the programme which would begin soon.

"There will be some flexibility on the steps to improve the school's performance and on the assistance which the companies can give."