

All aspects of school safety under review

PM: Any decision must not be made 'impulsively'

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PUTRAJAYA: Three key measures have been proposed during a Cabinet meeting to improve school safety, including a potential ban on smartphone use for students under 16, says the Prime Minister.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the Cabinet also recommended increased security monitoring in schools by the police and Home Ministry and proposed improving curriculum content with the involvement and support of parents and Parent-Teacher Associations, to instil values and discipline among students.

"We find that the influence of social media, and also online games, lead to negative behav-

iours," he said.

Anwar added that decisions on such serious matters such as education and children's welfare should not be made hastily.

"We must not respond impulsively. Any decision must be made carefully and thoroughly," he told reporters after performing Friday prayers at a surau here yesterday.

"Some countries allow smartphone usage for those below 16 years old. But, I feel we must be strict on this matter.

"First, it's safety and second it's social media and third, it's an ethical education content involving parents and PIBG (Parent-Teacher Associations) to control their children," said Anwar.

"The Cabinet and Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek will elaborate further and I hope, princi-



Preliminary discussions:

Anwar stresses that all options are on the table when it comes to the welfare of children.

— Bernama

pals, teachers and parents will give their full cooperation."

Meanwhile, Anwar said schools and principals must not conceal any wrongdoing involving students to protect their image.

He said sometimes principals have misplaced priorities as they are focused on preserving the school's reputation.

"That is why we have to pressure them to be responsible. Hiding wrongdoing is just like hiding crime.

"Sometimes, when bullying cases are small, we shrug it off as

nothing. But sometimes, small issues left unaddressed, can manifest into something bigger.

"I am not trying to blame anyone here, but I want to raise this here as a general reminder.

"A reminder to schools, don't protect. The bullying case may be small, but it exists," he added.

Anwar also said there must be a balance in disciplining students.

"While excessive caning must be avoided, teachers should not be penalised for disciplining students when necessary," he said.

On Tuesday, a 14-year-old male

student reportedly stabbed a 16-year-old schoolmate outside the girls' toilet in broad daylight using weapons that were brought to school.

The girl died from multiple stab wounds, while the boy is now in police custody to assist in investigations for murder.