

Fire Dept To Inspect Safety Standard At All Tahfiz Schools – Najib

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22/09/2017

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 22 (Bernama) -- The Cabinet has instructed the Fire and Rescue Department to inspect the safety standard at all Tahfiz religious schools in the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

He said this was necessary to prevent any recurrence of the fire at the Datul Quran Ittifaqiyah Religious School here on Sept 14 that claimed the lives of 21 students and two teachers.

Any of these schools found to be not abiding by the safety standard would be given time to implement the measures and failure to do so would result in their being ordered to close down, he said in his speech at the national-level Maal Hijrah celebration here.

Najib, however, did not state how much time the schools would be given to upgrade safety measures to meet the standard.

"This is a question of the safety of our children and we cannot compromise in the matter. I agree that this is a 'time bomb' that we cannot take lightly. It involves the lives of our children and it is our responsibility. It is not a question of the authority of the federal government or the state governments. It is a question of safety, welfare and, more so, the lives of our children," he said.

In the fire which started at 5.15 am on Sept 14 at the religious school, 21 students and two teachers who also stood in as wardens were burnt to death after they were trapped on the top floor of the three-storey building.

The police have arrested seven youths aged between 11 and 18 to help in the investigation into the fire which the Fire and Rescue Department has ascertained as arson.

Najib said the incident at the religious school was most saddening and continued to haunt him.

"I just cannot believe that teenage boys could have planned the crime in such detail to cause the deaths of 21 innocent students and two teachers.

"What wrong did they commit? Don't tell me a quarrel over futsal led to this crime. This is what has been haunting me," he said.

The Maal Hijrah event was also attended by Najib's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom and several other Cabinet ministers.

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