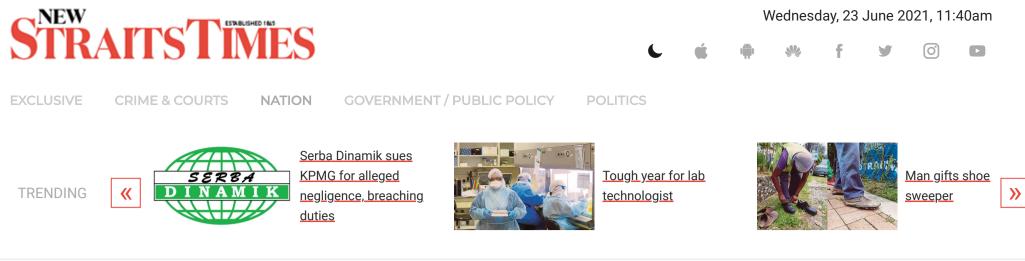
Improved SOP for reopening of schools

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Improved SOP for reopening of schools



By <u>Hana Naz Harun</u> - June 22, 2021 @ 11:44pm



Education Minister Datuk Dr Radzi Jidin said the ministry had several approaches in the pipeline, which would be implemented according to the situation at hand. - BERNAMA

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Education Ministry has formulated several plans to implement improved standard operating procedures (SOP) in preparation for schools to reopen under Phase 3 of the National Recovery Plan.

Education Minister Datuk Dr Radzi Jidin said the ministry had several approaches in the pipeline, which would be implemented according to the situation at hand.

"We have several options that we have prepared, which will be implemented based on the current situation.

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"We have plans to improve the current SOP for students to return to school, based on what we have learnt (over the past year).

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"Covid-19 is dynamic... so even though we have plans A, B or C, we wouldn't know which one to go with if we don't know the situation at hand," he said at a special virtual press conference on the National Recovery Plan.

Radzi did not divulge details of the plans to avoid confusion among teachers, parents and students.

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This is because schools would not be reopening any time soon.

He said based on the transmission risk and studies of previous Covid-19 cases in schools, a majority of infections had occurred in boarding schools.

"I admit that the ministry is facing challenges in boarding schools because it is harder to control and monitor the students.

"If a positive case is reported in normal schools, the ministry will carry out a 'mapping' exercise to identify how the infection occurred, including where it happened and where the affected student was seated.

"In classes, teachers can monitor their students, but it's a little bit more challenging to monitor those in boarding schools."

He added that the majority of Covid-19 cases reported in schools did not spread in classes, but rather, it was brought in from outside the school, where the students and pupils got the virus from their parents and others.

Radzi said to date, 148,580 teachers, or 36 per cent of the total number of teachers nationwide, had received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.

He said the ministry had prioritised 55,000 high-risk teachers, a majority of whom had already been inoculated. They were mostly educators teaching exam-year classes.



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"Alhamdulillah, more than 36 per cent of all teachers have been vaccinated. The process is ongoing. We hope teachers who have not registered for the vaccine will register, and those already given dates will attend their appointments," he said.

He added that while vaccinations were out of his control, his ministry could apply for priority from the Covid-19 Immunisation Task Force and the Special Committee for Ensuring Access to Covid-19 Vaccine Supply.

Radzi said while the education sector had been badly impacted by the pandemic, he understood that recovery would also depend on the availability of vaccines.

"The National Recovery Plan is our way out of the pandemic, which relies a lot on vaccines.

"If possible, we want all to be vaccinated immediately. I have discussed this matter with the Covid-19 National Immunisation Programme (NIP) coordinating minister Khairy Jamaluddin to prioritise exam-year students, those in Form Five and Form Six.

"As these students will be sitting for their examinations soon, we want them to return to physical classes and to do this, they would need to be vaccinated."

He said, however, the method and date when schools could reopen for physical learning would be decided by the National Security Council.

Touching on the one-off special intake of 18,702 Grade DG41 teachers, Radzi said the ministry was studying the need to hire graduates without any background in education to train them as teachers.

"We have graduates who underwent training at teachers' training colleges and public universities.

"However, if there is a need to hire those without a foundation in education, we will offer them training to ensure that they can conduct teaching and learning activities effectively."

On June 18, Khairy, who is also Science, Technology and Innovation Minister, said Form Five and Six students sitting for major examinations this year would be vaccinated starting next month.

It was reported that the Drug Control Authority had approved the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children aged 12 and above during its meeting on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had, on June 15, announced that schools would reopen in Phase Three of NRP, expected to be carried out in September and October.





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To enter Phase Three, the country must meet three threshold indicators, including an average daily case log of fewer than 2,000, Intensive Care Unit bed usage at "sufficient" levels, and ensure 40 per cent of the population are fully vaccinated.

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