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# Inspection ordered on all tahfiz

## PM instructs Fire Dept to do safety checks on schools nationwide

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Likening fire safety at tahfiz to a ticking time bomb, the Prime Minister has instructed the Fire and Rescue Department to check all such schools nationwide and to report its findings to the Cabinet.

Tahfiz that fail to meet minimum standards will then be given a certain period of time to comply and those that still fail to do so after that will be shut down, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He added that there would be no compromise on the matter.

"This is a time bomb that we cannot look upon lightly. This is not a question of state or federal powers but is about the future, welfare and safety of our children which we must protect," Najib said in his speech at the national-level Maal Hijrah celebration at the Federal Territories mosque here.

The Cabinet, said Najib, had decided to take this course of action during its weekly meeting on Wednesday.

There are currently 941 tahfiz nationwide with more than 150,000 students.

"Those which are not up to standard will be given a time frame to



Tahfiz  
fire  
tragedy

comply. And if they still fail, they must close down because this involves our children's safety, which we will not compromise," said Najib.

The Cabinet on Wednesday agreed with the six recommendations proposed by the Tahfiz Special Task Force to amend the Education Act 1996 (Act 550), following a fire at the Darul Quran Ittifaqiyah tahfiz on Sept 14.

The horrific early morning fire resulted in the deaths of 21 students and two teachers, shocking the entire nation.

According to police records, from 1989 to date, 39 fire cases have been recorded at tahfiz, resulting in 56 deaths. There have also been fires at these schools which did not cause any casualties.

Under the current Act, private schools (which are required to adhere to the regulations) do not

include schools teaching only religious subjects such as tahfiz.

Najib said the fire incident was heartbreaking, adding that fire safety at tahfiz was something that he was very concerned about.

"I find it hard to believe that there are youths, in their teens, who can plan a criminal act in such detail leading to the death of 21 innocent children and two teachers," he said, referring to the seven youths held over the case.

"What were their sins, how could an argument about futsal prompt such a crime to be committed upon innocent children?"

"It haunts my mind into thinking what should be done.

"As a country and community, we must figure this out together but the pressing thing is what should we do now," said Najib.

Fire and Rescue Services Department director-general Datuk Wan Mohd Nor Ibrahim is grateful for the mandate given by Najib, saying that the call was "very timely".

He said his department had adequate logistics to carry out the audit on the fire safety protocols at tahfiz schools nationwide.

"We have set up a task force and

we will be ready to move in a month's time.

"My department now has the mandate and we will move in swiftly to check on these schools' fire safety. We will compile a report on it for further recommendations to the Ministry," he said when contacted.

National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Niosh) chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye hailed Najib's firm stand not to compromise on the safety of children studying at tahfiz.

"The issue cuts across race or religion as it involves the safety of our children. The aspect of safety must be given the utmost priority," he said.

Lee, who was roped into the newly formed special task force on tahfiz, drew parallels between office buildings and schools which require mandatory safety features.

"The onus is on the building managers to ensure that their premises are safe," he said.

Watch the video  
[thestartv.com](http://thestartv.com)

