

# Inculcate online etiquette early on, say academicians

**PETALING JAYA:** Educationists are advising parents and teachers worried about their children's behaviour online not to wait for the Education Ministry to formally introduce social media etiquette in schools.

Universiti Putra Malaysia vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Aini Ideris said lecturers and teachers should not wait for a ministry directive to start teaching children responsible and safe online engagement.

"Instead, they should educate youths on the importance of media literacy and ethics in whatever way they can," she said.

According to a 2017 survey by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 83.2% of children aged five to 17 were Internet users.

Text communication, social networking, getting information and watching videos were found to be the top online activities for children.

Social media etiquette, she said, could also be included in any related subject in school – even while conducting co-curricular activities.

"It is also a good idea to include real examples and case studies to give students a proper picture of the consequences of an insensitive online post," she added.

Perdana University former vice-chancellor Prof Dr Zabidi Azhar Mohd Hussin believes

**Teaching children responsibility:** Experts say it's time to educate school students on how to use social media correctly.

ethics should be taught by teachers and lecturers at every opportunity, although there is no certainty that this will be put to practice.

"I don't believe it should be taught in an academic setting. As a paediatric neurologist, it is known that empathy and respect are developed through seeing things, not through reading about it.

"Students should be brought out of their classrooms to places where after experiencing and seeing (what others go through) will have empathy and respect inculcated in them," he noted.

Parents also have a role to play in teaching children how to be polite – whether online and offline, said Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE).

"It is the parents' responsibility to ensure

that their children are well-behaved, safeguarded and understand their roles and responsibilities in society – regardless if it is the virtual or real world," said its honorary secretary Tunku Munawirah Putra.

While social media etiquette programmes in schools would be a good move, he said their effectiveness depended on the resourcefulness of school leaders and administrators.

"Perhaps a simpler way is to have briefings during assembly on this topic and develop awareness campaigns through posters and signage placed around schools," he added.

National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) secretary-general Harry Tan said social media etiquette should be more of an awareness programme or a point of discussion but not a subject.

