

Back to school – one way or another

While some students went back physically, others had virtual lessons

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PETALING JAYA: Amid states being declared red zones, students nationwide returned to school – virtually and physically.

While the majority started their first day in the safety and comfort of home, more than 400,000 students who will be sitting for major exams went back to face-to-face learning.

The atmosphere on the first day of school was subdued as the Form Five and Form Six students from the class of 2020 returned to prepare for their examinations next month.

These students had to follow strict standard operating procedure (SOP) including staying at least one metre away from each other and wearing face masks.

This meant that they could not greet their friends – whom they had not seen for months – with hugs.

The students had their tempera-

tures scanned before heading straight to classes as well.

According to Wong Zhu Yi, 17, from SMK Munshi Abdullah, Melaka, the school was quiet as only those sitting for the 2020 Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) and Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM) were present.

He said the benefit of this was that studying in school was fuss-free.

He added that his school was well prepared to welcome the students back and had set up standing temperature scanners to expedite the entry to school.

In class, he said, they were allowed to move around to talk to their friends but had to stay a safe distance from each other.

“It’s certainly stressful being back in school with the pandemic still going strong but I’m sure that I can handle it and hopefully all my hard work will pay off,” he said.

SMK Pusat Bandar Puchong 1, Selangor, student Sally Nur Dinie

Lim, 17, said the first day back was more organised compared to when schools reopened last June.

She added that the teachers were on hand to make sure everyone complied with the SOP.

She said that the students were more aware of the SOP and its importance this time around with everyone conscientiously keeping their distance from each other and not removing their masks.

Unfortunately, not everyone stuck to the SOP that are meant to keep them safe.

A Form Six student who wanted to be known as Zhan said students in his school did not adhere to physical distancing, especially when they were buying food from the canteen.

“Some would remove their masks until a teacher told them off,” the 19-year-old said.

A secondary school head from Petaling Jaya who only wanted to be known as Anna said it was easy to have students comply with the

SOP as they were already familiar with them.

The presence of police personnel, who had come to help monitor the situation, also helped.

“Initially, the students were very excited to see each other but they quickly settled down when classes began,” she added.

She said that it was better for these exam candidates to complete the final leg of their preparations with face-to-face revision than doing it virtually.

“There is better response from the students as we interact with them,” she added.

Melaka Action Group for Parents in Education (Magpie) chairman Mak Chee Kin said although things went smoothly at most schools today, students should be given the choice if they wanted to attend school physically or virtually amid safety concerns.

“Now is not the time to bind anyone with a directive as some teachers are in the high-risk group and

candidates might be living with people who are considered high-risk,” he added.

Mak, who is also Kolej Tingkatan Enam Tun Fatimah parent-teacher association (PTA) chairman, suggested a rotation model to be used where Upper Six comes for three days while Lower Six for two days per week.

In a Facebook post, Education Minister Dr Mohd Radzi Md Jidin said that the ministry would continue to monitor SOP compliance in schools nationwide.

He visited SMK Putrajaya Presint 5 (1) and SMK Putrajaya Presint 16 (1) together with Education director-general Datuk Dr Habibah Abdul Rahim and secretary-general Datuk Yusran Shah Mohd Yusof to check on SOP compliance in the schools.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com

