

# Fatimah has mixed feelings on allowing students to bring mobile phones to school

**KUCHING:** Datuk Fatimah Abdullah yesterday expressed mixed feelings over the proposal to allow students to bring mobile phones and IT gadgets to school from next year.

The minister of Welfare, Women and Family Development said while the move was to encourage educators and students to embrace information technology, there was also a need to ensure there would be no interruption to classroom lessons.

"Having a mobile phone has become a need in today's world. Parents can contact their children to know their whereabouts after school, or they may need to give last minute reminders.

"We have to ensure how best mobile phones will not become a distraction in class, and how best the device can be used as a tool of learning," she told the press after opening the 'Third Conference in Advancing Social Series: Improving Practice

Competencies through Education and Mentoring' organised by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) yesterday.

"We have to accept that the world is different now. This is a trend. Almost every child and teenager has a mobile phone now.

"However, the main concern of teachers is students must concentrate on their lessons — there should not be any distraction.

"There must be guidelines on how to allow students to use mobile phones and IT gadgets which must be studied carefully," she pointed out.

On Monday, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong said students would be allowed to bring mobile phones and IT gadgets to school from next year after the rules and regulations under the Education Act 1996 were amended.

He said such changes needed to be made to encourage

educators and students embrace information technology in line with the Education Ministry's move to implement the virtual teaching and learning programme '1Bestari' nationwide.

He said changes would be made so that schools had the right to send female students for medical examination at hospitals should they detect any sign of pregnancy.

Currently, among the efforts to help pregnant teenage girls were counselling and providing shelter at Taman Seri Puteri in Telaga Air.

Also present were Malaysia Association of Social Workers (MASW)'s president Teoh Ai Hua, Professor Mohd Fadzil Abdul Rahman representing the vice-chancellor of Unimas Professor Dr Khairuddin Abdul Hamid, and organising chairman Gill Raja, a senior lecturer for Faculty of Social Sciences.