



Keep us safe: Campus security needs to be beefed up. - File photo.

We've been burgled

BETTER late than never.

Public varsities are finally stepping up measures to tighten security on campus after incidents of students complaining that their personal belongings had been stolen.

In April last year, Universiti Malaya (UM) PhD student Fong Chng Saun had several electronic gadgets stolen from his office.

He lost his laptop which contained his research data and a software license.

"There are always news of break-ins within my faculty, but I never thought I'd be a victim of it.

"I lost meteorological and air pollution research data worth just under RM2mil. The license alone cost me RM5,000."

The data was obtained from various governmental departments, he said.

The lack of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras is still unaddressed, he said, adding that there hasn't been much improvement in the university's handling of security in the department.

"After making a police report, I was approached by a lecturer from another faculty, who was also a victim of a similar break-in.

"She suggested we bring this up to the university's management level.

"UM even sent a forensic team to my office to gather evidence and fingerprints but I have not received any updates since."

While the university management is doing its best with the allocated funds, he, however, feels varsities should invest more in essential surveillance systems.

Fong, who completed his undergraduate degree in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), said his alma mater too faced similar problems.

"In UPM, there are so many entrances to the university. It's impossible to station officers at each of these entrances.

"With such limitations, our safety is more or less compromised," he shrugged.

Carlson Chew, 26, a research assistant in UM's Chinese studies department, had items amounting to RM8,000 stolen from his office.

It was a Saturday when he entered his office and realised it had been broken into.

"The lights were switched off and the door-knob was loose.

"I promptly informed my head of department and other colleagues while I checked what items were stolen," he said.

Electronic gadgets, hard disks and cam-corders were among the items the burglar took.

His office building has CCTV cameras but the culprit has yet to be identified although footage of the burglar has been handed over to the campus security and police.

Even lecturers are not spared.

This is an ongoing issue in UM, said an academic staff from the engineering design and manufacturing department.

Ashraf* had his office broken into in 2008.

"The glass on my room door was broken and the latch was opened from inside.

"CCTV captured the culprit's image but the footage was too grainy to make out the person's identity.

"The police also couldn't identify the cul-

priet because no fingerprints could be lifted from the crime scene," Ashraf added.

The break-in happened at night. His PC and monitor were stolen.

To improve security, Ashraf said the university replaced the single latch on his door with a double latch.

Other rooms which had latches on the inside were replaced with doorknobs which needed keys to open.

"There isn't much improvement where security is concerned; it's the same old thing. "I installed my own extra latch with a pad-lock in front."

Some of his other colleagues have also suffered a same fate.

Last year, UM had 14 cases of theft, break-ins, robbery and other crimes, the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) Crime Investigation Department (D4) officer DSP Rohazah Alwi said.

This is an increase from 12 cases in 2018.

"Although the crime rate in UM is relatively low, the police take these cases seriously because a university's compound should be safe, especially for its students and staff.

"The main contributing factor for a crime to happen is the opportunity," she said, adding that not having strict security control and individuals not taking precautionary steps, opens windows of opportunity for crime to happen.

But such crimes don't just happen in UM. After returning from a three-day trip from Terengganu with his friends in January, Muhammad Hisyam Md Yunus couldn't find his laptop bag. Only the laptop charger was left in his hostel room locker.

The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) law student who recently graduated promptly made a police report and informed the university's security office and management.

"They tried searching for my laptop but they haven't found anything yet.

"I was asked to fill out insurance forms by the university to claim for the loss but there has not been any progress since then and my claims still have not come through."

His laptop contained confidential information about his business venture, including academic assignments and documents, and data on the NGO activities he is a part of. He estimates the loss to be about RM7,000.

His friends have suffered similar fates and there are complaints almost every month to the campus security, he said.

"The university has taken preventive measures, like repairing lights along campus grounds and adding CCTVs, although not in all areas," said the 25-year-old.

Final year UPM students Taufiq* and Johan* admitted to losing their bags while praying in the university's mosque because of their own negligence.

While Taufiq reported his loss to the university, Johan didn't.

"I don't have faith in the university's system. There are no CCTVs in the area," he said.

They both lost laptops, bank cards and identity cards, among others.

*Names have been changed

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