

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The third phase of the movement control order (MCO) requires more cooperation from the people, including university students, in an effort to break the chain of the Covid-19 infection in the country.

While there have been appeals from students in public and private institutions of higher learning to be allowed to return home with the closure of the colleges and universities during MCO, the government decided that they stay on at their respective campuses or at their respective accommodation for the off-campus students.

At Universiti Teknikal Melaka (UTeM), the welfare, health and safety of its 2,027 students staying at the residential colleges and those staying off-campus are being given priority by the university management.

UTeM Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Affairs) Associate Professor Dr Nurulfajar Abd Manap said the university has been providing free food to the students since the first phase of MCO which began last March 18. The students will continue



DR Nurulfajar

# Varsities prioritise welfare of students

getting three meals a day under the third phase of MCO, and for Ramadan, which begins end of next week, Muslim students will get food for the breaking of fast and also for 'sahur' (pre-dawn meal), he added.

He said the process of distributing food is assisted by student volunteers. Students only have to enter their personal details at the QRCode as it appears in the cafeteria whenever they go to collect the food.

"The university also distributes dry food and other basic necessities through the UTeM Siswa Food Bank, like biscuits, bread, drinking water, instant noodle packs, toothpaste, soap and towel," he said when contacted by Bernama.

For off-campus students, he said, they are provided dry food for them to cook, as well as personal needs, which is contributed by

various parties including university staff, government and private agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and individuals through the UTeM Disaster Relief Fund.

Nurulfajar said the University Health Center (PKU) is also opened to provide health services to students.

PKU also provides online counselling service for students, he added.

He said the Counselling Unit from the university's Student Affairs Office conducts screening on its students, including the off-campus students, to identify those facing depression, stress and other emotional problems.

"With Ramadan to start in a few days, the menu at the cafeteria has been properly planned, including to cater for the needs of non-Muslim students," he said, adding that the residential colleges are also planning to organise Quran reading online.

Meanwhile, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Affairs and Alumni) of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Prof Dr Mohd Roslan Sulaiman said the university constantly monitors the well-being of its students at the campus and also those staying off-campus during the MCO period.

"Food aid is distributed for them since the first phase of MCO," he said adding that a total of 2,367 UPM students at its Serdang campus here and also in Bintulu, Sarawak, are provided

free meals three times a day, as well as items for personal hygiene and health.

"The university also provides dry food for cooking and personal hygiene and health care items to about 1,200 students staying off campus," he added.

A final year student at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) at the Kuala Pilah campus in Negeri Sembilan, Izzami Jemaain, 20, who is taking a Diploma in Microbiology chose to remain on campus to avoid the risks of the Covid-19 infection.

"The situation at the campus is under control and all the students are safe. We get assistance from UiTM and also others. Everybody is in good health, but we all are missing home.

"Although some students are disappointed not being able to go home for Ramadan, they remain positive and will remain in campus," he added.

A survey on social media found majority of university students who remain in campus during MCO reacting positively to the assistance and facilities provided by

their respective universities.

"All is good. They (University of Science Malaysia, Penang) provide us with coupons that can be used for food and mart. Online classes are great. Still working hard to finish the final year project ... and we're all one call away if need help on counselling and university clinic," said Ain Alias on the Twitter account @miloaisbungkus.

"Alhamdulillah, we, at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), are provided food twice daily, as well as packet drinks, mineral water, fruits, donuts, toothpaste, detergent, rice and others. The wifi is fast. The security unit is friendly. We feel protected and are happy. Thank you UUM," said Sophie Jamil on her Twitter account @sophie\_6687. - Bernama



DR Mohd Roslan