

Universities give priority to welfare, health, safety of students during MCO

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 to get free three meals a day under the third phase of MCO, and for Ramadan, which begins end of next week, the 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 the 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.