

Students laud 'return home' plan but want strict SOP

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PETALING JAYA: After being away from their families for almost a month, campus-bound students are hoping to see their loved ones soon.

They, however, want the government to come up with strict and competent standard operating procedure (SOP) if they are allowed to return home.

This is because they don't want to be the cause of Covid-19 cases spiking again in the country.

Universiti Malaya Students' Union president Muhammad Haziq Azfar Ishak, 22, said preventive measures must be considered, such as temperature screening and ensuring social distancing in every aspect, especially if students use public transport.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical student Muhammad Adib Farhan Abdullah, 23, welcomed a "return home" decision, provided the SOPs were solid and competent enough to prevent the spread of Covid-19 to students' hometowns.

"I don't know whether it's worth it for us to take the risk and go back home at this point.



Homesick: Thousands of varsity students are stuck in their dormitories, waiting to get the green light to return home.

"Medical screening and logistics should be looked into, and taking public transportation home may not be a good option. Higher learning institutions should consider providing transportation to students who need it," he said, adding that these institutions should collaborate to optimise their resources.

If, however, the government were to decide against allowing them to return, students must obey the decision as it was for the greater good, he said.

International Islamic University Malaysia student Muhammad Yusuf Nazaruddin, 23, said in the event they were not allowed home, vari-

ties must double their efforts in ensuring that students were in good mental health.

Being cooped up was taking a toll on them, he admitted.

"I miss home. My roommates managed to return home before the MCO was enforced, and I can't stay locked in here anymore.

"Proper SOPs must be in place to ensure that campus-bound students who return home will not cause a resurgence in Covid-19 cases," said the third-year Economics and Science Management student.

Malaysian Association for Private Colleges and Universities president Datuk Paramjit Singh welcomed a decision to allow students to return home, as long as it was well organised.

"There must be controlled departures to avoid bottlenecks and try to ensure an organised transport system to bring students back to their hometowns.

"Also, all students should be medically certified and cleared to travel back," he said, adding that it was unfair to force students to remain on campus when they wanted to be with their families – especially when

the course timetable was still uncertain.

Letting them return, he said, would lessen parents' anxiety.

"Some students are also suffering a sense of desolation from being alone and confined to their own rooms. Even though some live only 30km away, they are still not allowed to go back. If the MCO is extended, it could lead to undesirable outcomes for them."

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia dietetics programme head Assoc Prof Dr Roslee Rajikan said some sacrifices must be made to ensure that the current rate of decline among Covid-19 cases in the country remains.

"Many aspects must be considered before a decision is made by the government, such as students' current location, whether their hometowns are in red or green zones, whether they have been tested for Covid-19 and if they have clearance following the test.

"Accessibility to online teaching and learning must also be looked into, and the transportation and movement of students to their hometowns too," he said.