

Students excited to return home

MoHE: We are working on an SOP and will announce guidelines soon

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PETALING JAYA: Starting Monday, over 50,000 students in higher education institutions will be reunited with their families and loved ones.

After being campus-bound for over a month, these students are excited to be returning home.

Many have started packing their bags yesterday when Senior Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob announced that students stranded in campuses would be allowed to return home but with strict standard operating procedure (SOP) in place.

Its holistic student division director Dr Zaid Omar said the Higher Education Ministry (MoHE) was making arrangements on the best and safest methods to get students home.

"We are working on the SOP and a way to bring the students back safely. We will announce the guidelines soon," he told *The Star*.

Nur Ayuni Mohd Norudin, who stayed back at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia for her exams, ended up being stuck for two months when the movement control order (MCO) kicked in on March 18.

Unable to contain her joy, the fourth year Quran Multimedia student from Kota Baru has already made a list of all the items she'll be bringing home with her.

"I can't wait to see my parents."

Battling Covid-19



While she longs to hug them, the 23-year-old knows that she has to practise social distancing.

"Soon after hearing the announcement that we would finally be allowed home, my parents called.

"They told me to be patient and to wait for instructions from the university."

Nur Ayuni's father, Mohd Norudin, said he too would wait for further instructions from the university.

He is confident a proper logistic plan will be in place to ensure that the movement of students is done in a safe and orderly manner.

International Islamic University Malaysia student Muhammad Yusuf Nazaruddin, 23, is raring to go home.

He has cleaned his room and his bags are packed.

He was watching Ismail Sabri's live press conference on his mobile phone when the good news was announced.

"My parents in Kota Baru, Kelantan, are eagerly waiting to welcome me home.

"I can't wait to celebrate Ramadan with them. It's been a long time since we broke fast together as a

family because it's usually during this period that I will have my final semester exams," said the third-year Economics and Science Management student.

While waiting for details of her son's return, his mum is already looking at what the family needs to do in terms of logistics.

Developmental Science student Muhammad Aiman Hasbullah, 23, however, will not return to Padang Besar, Perlis, to be with his family for Ramadan and Hari Raya even though he misses them dearly.

He believes staying put is the best as he wants to keep his family safe.

"I am sad. No doubt everyone wants to celebrate with their family, but I need to think of whether I'll end up being a carrier of the virus.

"I have an 80-year-old grandmother, a pregnant sister and an infant niece at home.

"And, my father has gout. My body may be able to recover from the virus if I get it, but theirs may not," said the final year student at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's (UKM) Bangi campus.

The campus is located near Hulu Langat which has been classified a red zone.

"I also have friends who can't return home so we'll just video call our families to join in the get together.

Political Science student Yillson Yanggun, 23, from Kota Marudu, Sabah, will also remain on campus to minimise the risk of contracting

and spreading Covid-19.

"It is also because UKM already announced that online classes for the new semester will start on April 27.

"I'm happy for my friends who can finally return but I'm staying on campus to attend the online lectures because I don't have Internet at home."

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) deputy vice-chancellor (student affairs and alumni) Prof Dr Mohd Roslan Sulaiman said the varsity had prepared buses to help with the movement of students back to their hometowns.

"We want to ensure that they return safely. We have a plan and SOP on how to transport students home and we are coordinating with other universities," he said, adding that the varsity was waiting for approval from the government to proceed.

UKM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor said the varsity had already drafted a plan while waiting for an official announcement from MoHE.

He said UKM would follow strictly all rules set by the government.

Prof Hamdi said the university would send students home in stages if needed.

"Our deputy vice-chancellor (student affairs), Prof Datuk Osman Abdul Karim, is handling the operation," he said.

While waiting for the ministry's official announcement, a spokes-

person from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) said the institution had planned ahead by looking into all possibilities since the MCO was first announced.

"USM has been thinking about how to help students return home safely and aiding those confined on campus to conduct activities like lab work," said the spokesperson.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Public Health Physicians Association (PPPKAM) has proposed a reunification action plan to the Women and Family Development Ministry, the National Security Council (NSC) and Health Ministry.

The proposal, PPPKAM president Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said, included suggestions on the management of the 'before', 'during' and 'after' period of the reunion.

"Online applications (should be) made available for this operation, (so) any stranded person can download the app and apply for approval to travel.

"Necessary medical examinations and testing for Covid-19 must be done before travel clearance can be obtained.

"This must be done to allay fears of possible risks of transmission to the population at the destination," the proposal read.

Watch the video
[thestartv.com](https://www.thestartv.com)

