

Huge relief for 790 varsity students

Sleepless nights for thousands of others waiting for news on applications

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PETALING JAYA: For many of the thousands of university students stuck in their hostels for almost six weeks, it was a huge relief when almost 800 of them were finally able to head home.

But for the huge number of others still waiting for news on their applications, it will be sleepless nights until they know whether they can join in the exodus.

Students have to undergo health screenings for body temperature, sore throat, cough, cold and shortness of breath conducted by the Health Ministry and the University Health Centre before they are cleared to return home.

A total of 790 students from local



higher education institutions started their much-anticipated journey from the central region back to their respective hometowns in the northern region last night after being stuck in their hostels since the start of the movement control order (MCO) on March 18.

Tonight, 265 more will board buses from the northern region to the central region.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) vice-chancellor Prof Dr Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor said they

had been planning for this since the second phase of the movement control order (MCO).

"What we are doing now is just to activate and assimilate it according to the overall plan by the Higher Education Ministry.

"The students are extremely happy and excited to go home," said Prof Hamdi. He said UKM had taken good care of the students while they were on campus.

"It is our hope that they will observe social distancing and reach their destinations safely," he said, adding that 10 buses with 150 students departed UKM last night.

Universiti Putra Malaysia vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Aini Ideris also said they had been planning to send their students home since the second phase of the MCO.

Being given such a short notice

did not pose a problem for the research university, she said, adding that those going home would be observing strict social distancing measures.

Prof Aini said the students would also be provided hand sanitiser, face masks and meals for sahur.

"I am sure parents are looking forward to having them home in the current situation. Keep safe and follow the MCO as instructed by the authorities," she added.

A total of 102 students left in six buses from UPM.

Universiti Malaya vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Abdul Rahim Hashim said the university had been working tirelessly to prepare for the exodus.

"We hope everything turns out well," he said, adding that he was grateful the students were allowed to go home after spending more

than a month on campus.

He told the students to "remember to keep up with your studies and attend your online classes".

On Sunday, Higher Education Minister Datuk Dr Noraini Ahmad announced that university students nationwide would be allowed to return to their homes if they met certain conditions.

The main criteria is that their hometowns must be located in green zones.

She said the ministry would provide transportation to take students from the identified centres at their institutions to their destinations.

Noraini also explained that the safety and health aspects of the students were a priority, so each transport service would be accompanied by a liaison officer with a complete list of students.