

FIRST BATCH OF STUDENTS HEAD HOME

790 university students arrive safely in Perlis, Kedah and Penang, says Ismail Sabri

KUALA LUMPUR

THE first batch of 790 university students from nine universities have safely arrived at their hometowns in Perlis, Kedah and Penang, said Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

The defence minister said another 88 students from universities located in the northern zone returned to their homes located in the central zone yesterday.

"The students are from Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Mara in the Merbok and Penang campuses.

"The process of sending students within the same zones (interzone) such as to and from the northern zones, involving Perlis, Kedah, Penang and Perak; and to and from eastern zones such as Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang; will begin tomorrow (today). It will involve 4,878 students," he added.

Ismail Sabri said that of the 4,878 students, 653 were from the northern zone, 1,165 from the eastern zone, within Sabah (2,164 students) and within Sarawak (833).

In **George Town**, the first batch of university students stranded at campuses in the Klang Valley since the enforcement of the Movement Control Order (MCO) arrived home yesterday morning.

The students' relatives, limited to one per family, were seen wel-



A police officer collecting forms from students at the Kota Setar district police headquarters in Alor Setar yesterday. PIC BY AMRAN HAMID

coming their loved ones when they arrived at the northeast district police headquarters since 4am yesterday.

The coaches were from Universiti Malaya, Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Mara, among others.

As part of the procedure, the students were called up one by one, accompanied by their family members, to fill up forms.

Police also reminded parents to go straight home after picking up their children.

Mohd Sultan Mohd Meera Sahib, father of student Mohd Alif Fikri, burst into tears as he embraced his son.

Mohd Sultan, in his 50s, said that the family endured sleepless nights for the past month thinking about their son.

"We were worried over his safe-

ty. The virus could reach anyone. Anyone can be infected with it.

"Alhamdulillah, my beloved son has now returned (to us) safely," said the man from Air Itam.

Mohd Alif, 21, said the authorities managed the procedure well, from the departure at his campus until his return here.

He expressed gratitude to the government for finally allowing students to return to their parents during the Covid-19 crisis.

"Everything was done in a systematic manner. We were also treated well back at campus," he added.

Bukit Aman Crime Prevention and Community Safety Department (JPKK) director Datuk Zainal Abidin Kasim said the next movement would involve a larger group of students today.

He said the operation to reunite students with their family members was expected to last until May 10.

"Our officers escorted the buses closely since they left the campus and the journey was smooth until arrival here," he said.

The process of transporting the first batch of students involved 32 buses to Kedah, 13 to Penang and five to Perlis.

In **Kota Kinabalu**, students returning from out of state would be screened upon arrival at entry points in the state, said Sabah Health department director Datuk Dr Christina Rundi.

"The health screening will be conducted at the entrance and if



A student being helped with her luggage by a family member at the Northeast district police headquarters in George Town yesterday. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD

there is a need, they will be referred to the hospital.

"Meanwhile, other students have to undergo quarantine for 14 days. This also applies to all passengers coming from other states or countries," she said in a statement.

She said those told to undergo 14 days' quarantine either at home or at designated centres would have their samples taken twice for Covid-19 screening.

Sabah has 100 active cases, with one more from Kota Kinabalu yesterday.

Meanwhile, Dr Christina said the blood bank supply at hospitals had dropped to 24 per cent

compared with last year.

"Due to the implementation of the MCO, almost 98 per cent of blood donation drives had been cancelled.

"The shortage of blood supply is expected throughout Ramadan and upcoming festivals."

She said the Health Ministry had come out with guidelines to ensure the safety of blood donors, which include prioritising those with appointments to ensure social distancing.

"The blood bank unit will provide shuttle services for a small group of donors to donation areas. They may call the nearest hospital to arrange transportation."