

PUTRA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE e-NEWSLETTER

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Special Issue: COVID-19

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AGRICULTURE • INNOVATION • LIFE

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

We take this opportunity to wish Eid Mubarak to all international students and staffs at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). The 2020 Raya celebration is very much different this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Multiple precaution measures have been taken by i-PUTRA at UPM in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among the students and staffs. Here, we share the initiatives undertaken by UPM to curb the spread of Covid-19.

18th June, 2020 @ 28th Syawal, 1441 H
Assoc. Prof. Dr Hasfalina Che Man
Editor-in-Chief
Putra International Centre e-Newsletter

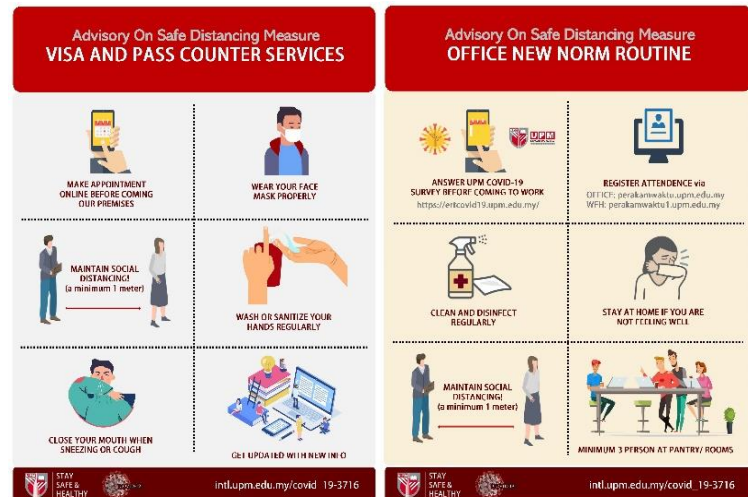


Figure 1: Infographic of good hygiene practices

COVID-19: INITIATIVES BY i-PUTRA

The Malaysian government has made massive efforts to contain the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country, including enforcing a Movement Control Order (MCO) that took effect on 18th March 2020 until 9th June 2020 for four phases consecutively. i-PUTRA has closely monitored the situation and responded to the measures taken to combat COVID-19. Throughout the MCO, i-PUTRA regularly provides information for the students regarding the latest procedures and instructions from Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS) and Immigration Department of Malaysia (JIM) via i-PUTRA's official website and Facebook.

Through i-PUTRA website, useful linkages have been shared to ensure students receive the latest updates on visa and pass rules and regulation during MCO such as notification by EMGS for not accepting any application or passports (e.g., new, renewal, dependent, special pass etc.) up until 1st April 2020. Some of the initiatives undertaken by i-PUTRA included the operation of the visa and pass counter by introducing online application for student pass renewal via Google form, appointment scheduling using Google form and a drop-box tool for students to submit their documents in order to avoid direct contact.

All employees and students at i-PUTRA have to implement good hygiene control practices (as in Figure 1), including:

- Provide alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol at the counter and main entrance.
- Encourage workers/students to stay home if they are sick (body temperature is measured prior entering i-PUTRA).
- Encourage respiratory etiquette, including wearing face mask.
- Maintain social distancing of at least 1 metre from others.

During the MCO, i-PUTRA opened its operation counter but for a limited time and only applicable to several applications. For phase 1 (18 Mac-31 Mac) and phase 2 (1 April-14 April), passports were returned to the new students and for renewal applications. In the third phase (15 April-28 April), Visa and Pass Section introduced an online platform for renewal applications due to new information updates from EMGS. In order to ensure that students were staying safely at their own place, Visa and Pass Section had introduced online application through Google form. In the fourth phase (29 April-9 June), students were able to submit their dependent applications through the drop-box provided at i-PUTRA office.

COVID-19 CRISIS: UPM IS READY TO HELP STUDENTS

19 MARCH 2020 – UPM took proactive steps by opening a 24-hour Operating Room as a student reference center and fellows, who worked on shifts, catered to the students' needs at the Chancellor's Meeting Room throughout the Movement Control Order (MCO) period since 18th March 2020. Free meals and daily basic essentials are provided and delivered directly to the number of students who were still residing at colleges during the MCO. The meals included breakfast, lunch and dinner. During Ramadhan (from 24th April until 23rd May 2020), Muslim students were provided with meals for *sahur* (pre-dawn meal before fasting) and *iftar*.

As for UPM students who are staying at home, the University Health Center (PKU) keeps in touch with the respective students to obtain their health status information. The PKU operates from 8am to 5pm on weekdays to provide care to students in need and a day-to-day risk screening counter service. UPM students are reminded not to leave the campus for health and safety purposes in order to prevent Covid-19 infection.



Figure 2: Food packs given to UPM students.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS PRODUCE FACE SHIELDS TO HELP FRONTLINERS

30 MARCH 2020 - Educational institutions have come together to produce face shields for frontline healthcare workers in battling the Covid-19 outbreak. At Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), a team of experts and volunteers produced 5,000 face shields for frontliners at the government hospital near the campus. A total of 30 UPM experts and volunteers led by the 'Putra Makers Space UPM' based at the Faculty of Engineering, collaborated with three UPM labs. The team comprised of 19 members from the Faculty of Engineering, six members from the Longe Medikal Sdn Bhd-Putra Science Park and five from the Faculty of Design and Architecture.



Figure 3: UPM experts and volunteers involved in face shields production.

UPM EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (ERT-UPM COVID-19)

2 APRIL 2020 - Since the beginning of the Movement Control Order on 18th March 2020 due to COVID-19 outbreak prevention, the Emergency Response Team at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) (ERT-UPM COVID-19) has played a crucial role in ensuring UPM's continuity of services and preparedness in handling the issue quickly and effectively. The team is led by the Incident Commander, UPM Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Datin Paduka Setia Dato' Dr. Aini Ideris. This operations room monitors and provide updates on the main activities in curbing the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak. Information regarding the level of risk within UPM community members is identified and analyzed daily. Those at high risk including the ones at Bintulu Campus are contacted immediately for further information.

Read more:

<https://www.hmetro.com.my/mutakhir/2020/04/561847/covid-19-upm-tubuh-pasukan-khas>



Figure 4: The operational team on duty.

MALAYSIAN VARSITIES JOIN COVID-19 TESTING BATTLE

8 APRIL 2020 - Recently, ten diagnostic laboratories at public higher learning institutions nationwide were roped in as part of a joint initiative by the Higher Education and Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry. The laboratories serve to help the Health Ministry in conducting 16,500 Covid-19 tests daily.

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)'s Medical Microbiology and Parasitology Department Head, Professor Dr. Syafinaz Amin Nordin said the Covid-19 laboratory at UPM Teaching Hospital (HPUPM) is ready to support the Health Ministry. The research areas include anti-microbial resistant bacteria, leptospirosis, viruses, dengue and hepatitis.

Read more:
https://www.nst.com.my/education/2020/04/582522/mala%20ysian-varsities-join-covid-19-testing-battle?%20fbclid=IwAR3tiLvSCmKZfy6xkUA68u9V6cXzoAEY_8i7PQ%20OSdhzqhWlr8v1x9amdij8



Figure 5: Frontliners involved in laboratory work.

BERNAMA: UPM STUDENTS GENERATE FACE SHIELDS FOR FRONTLINERS

14 APRIL 2020 - The YOSH Face Shield Heroes project, in collaboration with MyFundAction, the Malaysian Heart Health Organization (MyHeart) and YOSH UPM, aims to produce 5, 000 face protection units for hospital personnel as an initiative to assist in combating Covid-19.

Read more:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmRseb9BXGw>



Figure 6: Face shields production process.

UPM BINTULU RUNS BLOOD DONATION

15 APRIL 2020 - UPM Bintulu runs blood donation drive to help replenish blood bank at hospital - The Borneo Post



Blood bank personnel monitor the donors during the donation drive at UPM Bintulu Campus.

UPM Bintulu runs blood donation drive to help replenish stock at hospital

BINTULU: The shortage of stock at Bintulu Hospital blood bank, triggered by the current Covid-19 situation, prompted volunteers from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Bintulu Campus to run a blood donation drive recently.

Run in collaboration with the blood bank, the programme was divided into two sessions – each limited to a maximum of 15 donors, who comprised mainly the university staff members and students.

The drive recorded 29 donors. "The Movement Control Order (MCO), which took effect on March 18, has affected blood donation activities."

For this drive, key precautions have been put in place in line with the procedures outlined under the MCO such as the one-metre social distancing, and the provision of face masks and hand sanitisers to the donors.

"Every equipment and device has been disinfected; every donor must be screened before they could donate blood," said UPM Bintulu in a statement.

Meanwhile, a spokesperson of Bintulu Hospital blood bank requested more donors to come and donate regularly, adding that a mobile blood bank unit would be despatched to their locations should there be any request for it.

Figure 7: Newspaper cutting on blood donation drive at UPM Bintulu.

UPM DEVELOPING ROBOTS TO COMBAT COVID-19

15 APRIL 2020 - A team of robotics experts from Universiti Putra Malaysia's Faculty of Engineering is in the midst of developing five robots that can disinfect and protect against the spread of COVID-19 virus. The project leader Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wan Zuhra Wan Hassan said the robots would be useful for a hospital's Emergency Response Team to avoid infection to frontliners. They hoped to offer robotic services such as serving food, disinfection and thermal imaging for public hospitals and healthcare providers if they were requests and funding from any interested parties.

Read more:

<https://www.nst.com.my/education/2020/04/584432/upm-developing-robots-combat-covid-19>



Figure 8: Newspaper cutting on robot development to combat Covid-19

UPM ESTABLISHED AN EMERGENCY CALL CENTER FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

16 APRIL 2020 - Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) established a Public and Special Emergency Call Centre (Hotline) for crisis communications and emergency assistance during the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO). The existence of the call centre was also aimed at preventing the spread of fake news, thus ensuring that all university students received valid information. Universities are constantly communicating using internal notification platforms through official channels such as official email info@upm.edu.my (staff and students), UPM official social media, telegram and UPM official website as needed.

UPM had also been successful in public advocacy by providing information and sharing of expertise. This public advocacy has discussed the impact of Covid-19 pandemics in various aspects such as medicine, public health, veterinary medicine, agriculture, economics, information technology, psychology, indigenous people and human safety.

Read more:

<https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/wilayah/2020/04/677813/pkp-upm-wujud-pusat-panggilan-kecemasan-untuk-hadapi-krisis>



Figure 9: UPM surroundings during MCO.

UPM VOLUNTEERS MAKE 1,000 FACE SHIELDS FOR HOSPITAL KUALA LUMPUR

23 APRIL 2020 - The Malaysian Heart Health Organisation (MyHeart) and MyFundAction presented 1,000 face shields, hand sanitizers and face masks to Hospital Kuala Lumpur (HKL). In total, the organisations assembled 5,000 face shields in collaboration with volunteers from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) to be distributed to HKL, Hospital Sungai Buloh and other Covid-19 hospitals. It took 35 UPM volunteers working for four days to make the 1,000 face shields which were later presented to HKL.

Read more: <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2020/04/23/volunteers-make-1000-face-shields-for-hkl>



Figure 10: Newspaper cutting on UPM volunteers working on 1000 face shields.

STUDENTS EXCITED TO RETURN HOME

27 APRIL 2020 - Over 50,000 students in higher education institutions were reunited with their families and loved ones after being campus-bound for over a month. The university followed the standard operation procedures (SOP) for bringing the students back to their home safely. 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 in Semenanjung (only for green zones) and to Sabah and Sarawak by local flights.



Figure 11: One of the students' room in their hostel.

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE TO COVID 19 IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA THROUGH UNESCO

30 APRIL 2020 - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ismi Arif Ismail, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Habibah Ab Jalil, Prof. Dr. Abdul Lateef Krauss and Prof. Dr. Shamsir Shahir Omar and Innovative Learning Sciences RCOE (INNOVATE) Team from UPM and UTHM took part in presenting a Malaysian experience in responding to higher education teaching and learning during COVID-19, sharing best practices and mutually supporting member countries through UNESCO.



Figure 12: UNESCO collaboration in responding to Covid-19 issues.

UPM PRODUCES 100 PPE PER DAY

30 APRIL 2020 - In order to fulfill the needs of the University Health Centre in the pursuit of initiating the enforcement to prevent Covid-19 infection, Clothing Technology Laboratory from the Faculty of Educational Studies, UPM has taken the initiative to escalate the production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to reach 100 units per day. Approximately 20 UPM scholars and staff participated in the sewing process. The laboratory is equipped with 32 industrial sewing machines, six edge sewing machines, two button sewing machines, a fabric cutting sewing machine and other sewing instruments.



Figure 13: PPE production process (Source: Harian Metro, 2020)

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON FOOD SYSTEM WEBINAR

2 MAY 2020 - The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), Science Media Centre (SMC) Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia organized a Webinar on "The Impact of Covid-19 on Food Systems". In order to increase the event outreach, the webinar was live-streamed on UPM Facebook. The Zoom business platform was provided by SMC, with no financial implication to UPM.

Speakers:

1. Prof Dr Paul Teng, Rajaratnam School of International Studies, NTU, Singapore
2. Assoc Prof Dr Shaufique Fahmi Sidique, Director, Institute of Agricultural and Food Policy Studies UPM
3. Tan Su Lin, Co-Founder SMC Malaysia Moderator: Dr Mahaletchumy Arujanan, Global Coordinator at International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA)



Figure 14: Poster on the topic publicized.

UPM HAND SANITIZER, FREE OF CHARGE FOR FRONTLINE STAFF

5 MAY 2020 - Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) has successfully produced 1,255 liters of hand sanitary fluid in an effort to curb the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak. The UPM hand sanitizers were produced in two phases by the Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science. The sanitizers were donated free of charge to frontline staff at several institutions and locations. These included University Health Centre, UPM Teaching Hospital, UPM campus essential services, UPM students, B40 residents around Serdang, Putrajaya, Cyberjaya, Kelang, Kuala Lumpur and several red zones of COVID-19 infection.



Figure 15: Hand sanitizers produced by Faculty of Science, UPM.

The Faculty of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) has also produced an instant hand sanitiser product (50ml) and distributed it to UPM frontliners such as UPM Teaching Hospital, University Health Centre, University Security Division, as well as 1,200 students who are still on campus.

The first phase of production had produced 560 of 50ml bottles of hand sanitizers which were delivered to the University's COVID19 Operations Room (OSHA) for distribution. The second phase produced more than 2,000 of 50ml bottles of the product, while in the third phase, the group will provide surface sanitizer for university use.

Earlier, a group of researchers from the Faculty of Engineering, UPM has taken the initiative to produce more than 700 hand sanitizers using aloe vera gel formulation to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The sanitizer is for internal use within the campus, especially at the central areas around the Faculty of Engineering, such as at the office counters and elevators, as the first precautionary measure for faculty members.



Figure 16: Hand sanitizers produced by Faculty of Engineering, UPM.

FREE ONLINE LEARNING AND FORUM DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

12 MAY 2020 - UPM took the initiative in providing students and staffs with helpful approaches in handling economic challenges especially those who are in the current predicament. Since the MCO began, there have been a number of online learning courses and forums conducted at UPM as interactive platforms for all staffs and students.

There have been a series of special talks on covid-19 which included topics like "Pre-And Post Mco: What Do Graduates Need?" through Zoom app on April 20th, 2020 at 10 am and, Helwani Talk 3.0 by UPM's psychologist officer, Madam Rafidah Sadarudin on June 12th, 2020 on the topic of 'Emotional and Mental Management' via Skype.

All internal information and notification are circulated via Telegram at UPM COVID-19 INFO. Through this group, all UPM staffs will get current information and latest updates on Covid-19.

EXPERIENCE SHARING BY MOBILITY STUDENTS

Returning back home amidst a global pandemic outbreak comes with its own set of challenges and experience unlike any other. Empty streets, with no public transportations, and empty airports were some of the scenes witnessed by 36 UPM outbound mobility students on their way back from the host universities abroad. These students have arrived safely in Malaysia, with the assistance from the Embassies, Government agencies, Putra International Center, friends and families.

An internship student from the Faculty of Agriculture, Ms Hasna Izzati and her fellow internship friends stated, "We have started preparing ourselves mentally, should the situation took turn for the worse prior to the implementation of the Movement Control Order". Fortunately, they managed to secure a flight back from Japan in April after multiple tries. Upon their return, they completed their mandatory 14 days quarantine in one of the quarantine centers assigned to them by NADMA.



Figure 17 : Ms. Hasna Izzati together with her fellow internship friends in Japan prior to their return to Malaysia

During the implementation of the Movement Control Order by the Malaysian Government in March, movement in and out of the country were restricted. To support the current international inbound mobility students who are staying in the campus, UPM is committed to ensure the necessities of the remaining students be fulfilled accordingly.

An International inbound mobility students from Shizuoka University, Japan, Mr Keita Isago shared his view in an interview with thestar.com.my. He used the MCO as an opportunity to improve his language skills and communicate everyday with family members via phone and video calls.

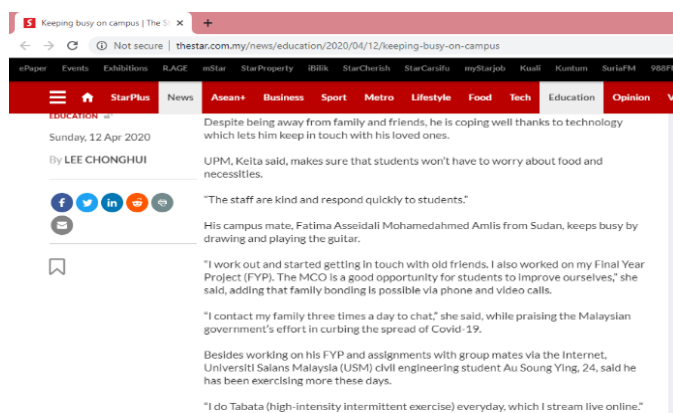


Figure 18 : UPM international students sharing their experiences in their interview with thestar.com.my

PUTRA Experience

Putra Experience is a cluster program where i-PUTRA offers both short term programs such as visits, professional training; and long term program such as internship, research attachment, and semester exchange that can go up to 12 months. Putra Experience allows international students to experience the perfect balance of academic excellence, unique culture, and amazing flora and fauna in Malaysia. For UPM students, Putra Experience provides the opportunity and support for students to experience a new culture and to broaden their horizon together with our partners. Come and join our Putra Experience Summer Programme at: https://intl.upm.edu.my/summer_school-3455



Figure 19: Summer programme as per advertised at i-PUTRA website

However, PUTRA Experience will be suspended for the year 2020 for the world to heal from COVID-19. Post COVID-19 will not deter us from offering the best immersive cultural programme in 2021.

Putra Experience. Striving Beyond Excellence.



RAYA WISHES FROM EDITORIAL TEAM 2020/2021

Prof. Dr. Zainal Abidin Talib (Advisor)
Assoc. Prof. Dr Afida Mohamad Ali
Madam Fairuz Muchtar Bawaze'er
Madam Ida Suhaila Md. Tahir
Ms Nadia Zawani Hussin
Ms Siti Afiqah Mastor