



Dr Vijay discussing with the UMS researchers.

UMS plays key role in MOH screenings

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KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is playing a significant role in assisting the Ministry of Health (MOH) to conduct Covid-19 screening tests on samples in Sabah.

According to UMS Biotechnology Research Institute (BRI) Director, Dr Zarina Amin, who is one of the researchers involved in the screening activity, the facilities and expertise at UMS are fully utilised for the purpose.

She said the screening conducted at their Biosafety Laboratory Level-3 (BSL3) facility is believed to help solve cases of delayed sample detection, thus, providing fast and accurate decision-making by MOH.

"UMS is very proud of the expertise of our researchers and the capabilities of our biotechnology lab facilities, which enabled the university to be directly involved in handling the Covid-19 crisis.

"As a public university that annually produces graduates in various fields, the involvement in the Covid-19 pandemic crisis is seen as a recognition to research and innovation of this university, particularly in the field of biotechnology," she said in a statement.



Meanwhile, Assoc Prof Dr Vijay Kumar from UMS BRI, who led the laboratory testing activity, said the screening activity which was initially scheduled for mid-April took place on April 9 instead, following the need to expedite tests on backlogged samples.

"Nevertheless, my research partners and I are ready to take on this responsibility whenever needed.

"We are very motivated to conduct the

Covid-19 screening test which is considered a great responsibility for the nation and for humanity worldwide," he said.

Dr Vijay also thanked the MOH in particular the Sabah State Department of Health and Sabah State Public Health Laboratory for the opportunity provided to UMS to work together in ensuring public health.

Besides Dr Vijay, four UMS researchers were also involved in conducting the test including Assoc Prof Dr Kenneth F. Rodrigues, Dr Cahyo Budiman and Dr Christopher Voo Lok Yung from UMS BRI, and Assoc Prof Dr Lee Ping Chin from the UMS Faculty of Science and Natural Resources.

Also helping throughout the event covering laboratory preparation and pre-analysis are Dr Noor Hydayaty Md Yusuf, Dr Nur Athirah Yusof, Salmi Afidah Shabudin, Mony Mian and Vidarita Maikin.

Covid-19 detection on all samples received went through the process of RNA extraction on cells followed by gene amplification using the Reverse Transcription Quantitative Polymerase Chain reaction (RT-qPCR) technique.