

Dapur Siswa programme gains momentum at UMS

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KOTA KINABALU: An initiative to ensure no student goes hungry on campus is gaining momentum at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) here, with the 'Dapur Siswa' programme now supporting about 3,500 students across two residential colleges.

State Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (KPSTI) Minister Datuk James Ratib said the programme, introduced by UMS, provides basic food supplies to students from less fortunate backgrounds, particularly those staying at the Tun Fuad and Tun Mustapha residential colleges.

James said the two colleges houses about 1,600 and 1,800 students respectively, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to around 3,500.

"This initiative is very good and timely, especially for students from rural areas who have limited financial resources," he said after visiting the Dapur Siswa facility at the Tun Mustapha residential college on Friday.

James said students are provided with staple food such as rice prepared by selected volunteers and fellow residents, while they may also bring their own raw ingredients or purchase side dishes from nearby cafeterias.

He said rising food prices have made it increasingly difficult for some students to meet daily



Hairiezal Herman



Andi Nurnisa Syahfikah Sahabu

expenses, noting that the cost of a packet of rice alone has increased significantly.

"As the state government, we welcome contributions from various parties including non governmental organisations and government linked companies, whether in the form of raw food supplies or financial assistance, to help ease the burden on students," he said.

The minister also announced a personal contribution of RM30,000 as an initial allocation for the programme and said he would engage several government linked companies under his ministry to support the initiative on an ongoing basis.

UMS vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Kasim Mansor said the programme was formally implemented in November last year, although similar efforts had existed earlier in a less structured manner.

Kasim said the initiative was formalised to ensure students

are aware that such facilities are available at residential colleges for those in need.

"This is just the beginning. We are planning to expand the Dapur Siswa facilities to other residential colleges, including in Labuan and at the Tun Pengiran Ahmad Raffae residential college, which houses more than 3,500 students," he said.

Kasim said the facility operates from morning until midnight and is equipped with closed circuit television cameras to ensure safety and prevent misuse.

He added that UMS is committed to ensuring all students have access to basic food facilities as part of the university's welfare support system.

Meanwhile, head volunteer of the Dapur Siswa at the Tun Mustapha residential college, Hairiezal Herman, 21, said the initiative has helped residents save money by allowing them to prepare meals at the college



James (third right) speaking to Kasim during the visit.

instead of buying food outside.

Hairiezal said the free rice supply has received positive feedback, particularly during times when campus cafeterias run out of food due to high demand.

"Students will come and ask whether there is still rice available. That shows they know the Dapur Siswa exists and that it really helps them," he said.

He said the selection of volunteers is open to college

residents with good disciplinary records, adding that the current team consists of 16 volunteers.

Third year UMS student Andi Nurnisa Syahfikah Sahabu, who is the head volunteer at the Dapur Siswa at the Tun Fuad residential college, said the programme has been running for about two months and is supported entirely by student volunteers.

Andi said 21 volunteers are involved in managing the facility, including cooking rice up to

three times a day depending on student demand.

"This initiative helps students save money and manage their daily expenses better. At least they have access to basic food and a place to store meals," she said.

She also encouraged more students to come forward as volunteers, saying additional help is needed to sustain the programme and support fellow students facing financial difficulties.