

Food Bank Siswa Programme to benefit 433 UMS students

By VESTA VANESSA JSOL

KOTA KINABALU: The Food Bank Siswa programme at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is expecting to ease the cost of living, benefiting 433 students.

Minister of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs, Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the beneficiaries who come from the low-income group (B40) or poor families will now have easier access to food through the university's Food Pantry Siswa UMS and Central Kitchen.

The Food Pantry Siswa is a place where dried foodstuffs such as biscuits are available while Central Kitchen is where fresh food is prepared before being distributed. Both are managed by the UMS student association.

Saifuddin was speaking during the programme launching ceremony here, yesterday.

"The programme aims to help the target group as well as to reduce wastage among Malaysians.

"Despite talking about the 4.0 Industry or Artificial Intelligence (AI), there are a number of Malaysians who suffer due to



Saifuddin (centre) handing over a bag of goodies to one of the recipients as part of the UMS Food Bank Siswa programme launch. Looking on from behind is Prof. Kamarudin.

poverty ... this is a real story happening now.

"We need to help them and Food Bank Siswa is among the initiatives."

Introduced by the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs on February this year, the Food Bank Siswa programme was introduced following the success of the Food Bank Malaysia programme.

It is aimed at controlling food surplus from the retail industry through the implementation of its corporate social responsibility programme, where unsold food surplus still safe for consumption is to be distributed to the poor – B40 households and public university students.

Currently, a total of 430 companies comprising hypermarkets are contributing to the

programme.

Saifuddin noted that UMS is the ninth university launching the programme.

Other universities involved in the programme are Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Permatang Pauh branch in Penang, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Medical Campus in Kuala Lumpur, Universiti Putra

Malaysia (UPM) in Serdang, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) in Skudai, Johor and KL, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and UniSZA in Terengganu.

The Food Bank Malaysia has helped about 113,706 households from the B40 group as of March this year, while Food Bank Siswa recorded up to 3,082 students. A total of 20,000 students over 20 public universities across Malaysia are targeted to be assisted by the end of this year.

Earlier, UMS Vice-Chancellor, Prof. D Kamarudin D Mudin expressed his hope that the programme will help to lessen the burden of students and give them the opportunity to focus on their academic progress.

"UMS has various types of assistance, especially in financial support.

"However, we realised the aid is still unable to cope with every student's needs. Therefore, with this initiative and co-operation from various parties, it will be a starting point for students to overcome the high cost of living dilemma and solving the 'ikat perut' (belt tight-

ening) problem among them."

GCH Retail Sdn Bhd (Giant Hypermarket), Chua Kah Seng Sdn Bhd (CKS Supermarket) and Adabi are the main contributors to the UMS Food Pantry Siswa.

Kamarudin also expressed his gratefulness to Maybank Islamic on their RM60,000 worth of donation to the university.

"This means a lot for us. The fund will be distributed to UMS students who are in need," he said, adding that more parties are hoped to step up and support the new programme.

Meanwhile, for Sarah Ng, 22, she believes that the Food Bank Siswa programme organised at several public universities is able to help students from the B40 group to have access to food.

She said this food programme was a good initiative to help students from poor backgrounds.

"This initiative is very helpful to those with financial difficulties. When faced with financial problems, students are also certainly having difficulty in obtaining food supply."