

# 326 tertiary students in Labuan return to Peninsula

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*A section of the stranded students about to board buses to head to Labuan Airport. — Bernama photo*

LABUAN: A total of 326 Peninsular Malaysia students of Universiti Malaysia Sabah Labuan International Campus (UMSKAL), stranded there since the Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented on March 18 to curb the spread of Covid-19, heaved a huge sigh of relief yesterday when they finally left for home via two chartered Malaysia Airlines flights.

The first group of 160 students left the Labuan Airport at 2.45pm while the remaining 166 students departed at 6.45pm.

They are the third batch of students to be sent home. The first batch of 47 students from Labuan Matriculation College returned to their hometowns in various parts of Sabah on Saturday (May 2) while the second batch of 33 students from Industrial Training Institute (ITI) left for home on Monday.

Labuan National Security Council director Nurzaliza Kartika Abdullah had earlier yesterday briefed the 326 students on the standard operating procedure (SOP), including on the need for social distancing, that they needed to comply with while on the flight as well as upon arrival at their respective destinations.

The students, who were all given hand sanitisers and face masks before boarding the flights, had also undergone random swab tests and health screenings last week.

Meanwhile, Labuan Natural Disaster Management Committee chairman Dr Fary Akmal Osman said that Health Department officials had checked the health condition of all the students who went home yesterday and they were all found to be medically fit to travel.

“Upon arrival at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), the authorities there will assist them in returning to their hometowns in Kuala Lumpur, Pahang, Johor and Perak,” she told reporters at the Labuan Airport, adding that there were still 300 UMSKAL students, including from Sarawak, waiting to return to their hometowns.

Dr Fary said the flights home yesterday were arranged by the Ministry of Higher Education, in collaboration with the Labuan Natural Disaster Management Committee and UMSKAL officials.

“Those from Sabah will be sent home by bus soon. Hopefully those from Sabah and Sarawak will be sent home before the Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration,” she said. — Bernama