

# Distance learning for prisoners

OUM keen to reduce fees for select few as programme gains traction among inmates

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**PETALING JAYA:** A distance learning programme for prisoners is flourishing and the university involved is keen to reduce the fees for a select few.

Open University Malaysia (OUM) has waived fees for the first semester for 25 prisoners who enrolled in its distant learning programme.

OUM president and vice-chancellor Tan Sri Anuwar Ali said the move was part of ongoing

efforts with the Prisons Department to provide tertiary education to those serving time.

To date, four have graduated with degrees and two with diplomas, he added.

However, death row prisoners and those serving life sentences are excluded.

"We are very proud of this collaboration with the department. We really hope that this will enhance the interests of other prisoners," said Anuwar.

Presently, 53 prisoners, most of them women, are pursuing Islamic studies, business and management courses.

Besides meeting the education criteria set by the Malaysian Qualifying Agency, prisoners must seek approval of the director-general of Prisons before they are allowed to enrol.

Once accepted, they will be issued with a letter of admission followed by a briefing by a faculty member to the prisoners and their warders.

Prisoners are accorded the same facilities extended to regular OUM students but they must be under close supervision by prison authorities.

Besides self-study, prisoners undergo online

learning where they interact with tutors and other students, and also meet with lecturers who visit the prison.

Prisons director-general Datuk Seri Zulkifli Omar lauded OUM for its long-term commitment and co-operation with the department.

He said the tertiary education opportunity by OUM was among the rehabilitation programmes available at prisons.

Zulkifli said inmates could use their diplomas and degrees obtained during their imprisonment to support their application for early release or parole.

## For three hours a month, no vehicles can enter JB city centre

**JOHOR BARU:** Beginning December, a day will be set aside to ensure no vehicles enter the city centre for about three hours.

Mayor Abdul Rahman Mohamed Dewam said the Vehicle-Free Day campaign, spearheaded by the Johor Baru City Council (MBJB), would "free" the streets for activities such as cycling, running, street soccer, aerobics and netball.

"For a start, we are looking at closing the roads between 8am and 11am," he said.

"We will start by having this once a month and decide later whether to increase its frequency," he added.

"The roads and areas will be announced later," he said.

Abdul Rahman said the Vehicle-Free Day campaign had been carried out in the past but

only outside of Johor Baru.

"This will be the first time we'll be doing it in the city," he said.

"The campaign is a good way to create public awareness about the importance of taking care of the environment and the city," Abdul Rahman told reporters after the opening of "JB Think Green - Making JB Alive".

It was launched by State Domestic Trade, Tourism and Consumerism Committee chairman Datuk Tee Siew Kiong here yesterday.

On the Think Green programme, Abdul Rahman said it was one of the efforts undertaken to preserve the environment and that it was not only focused on cleaning work.

"We hope that such programmes will enhance the sense of belonging among the public for the city," he said.



**Going green:** Abdul Rahman (second from left) and Tee (third from left) cycling during the Think Green programme organised by MBJB.

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