



New students and their families waiting for luggage to be unloaded from the bus so that they can start moving into the residential halls.



RimaUM gives a cheery wave and welcomes all new students to UM.



Family members helping the new students to settle into their residential halls at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). The students attended the Student Transformation Week that ended on Friday. UTHM vice-chancellor Prof Dr Wahid Razaly and deputy vice-chancellor (Student Affairs and Alumni) Assoc Prof Dr Afandi Ahmad mingled with parents and other family members who accompanied their children to the university.



Prof Aini (fifth right, middle row) takes a group photo with the national athletes representing Malaysia in the upcoming SEA Games.

By LEE CHONGHUI  
educate@thestar.com.my

ARMED with only a picture of their beloved mother and the clothes off their back, sisters Zumika Azmi and Sasha Azmi enrolled into Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) with the hope of creating a better future for themselves.

They are from the Orang Asli community in Pos Gob, Gua Musang, Kelantan. It is over 92km from Gua Musang and takes eight hours to reach during the dry season and 36 hours during the monsoon season.

The sisters are among the thousands of students who moved into the country's 20 public universities last weekend to start a new chapter in their lives.

Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik, in a video posted on his social media accounts, congratulated the students on their new beginning.

Besides gaining knowledge through lessons, journals and assignments, Maszlee advised them to be proactive in engaging with the community.

"Get close to the community and be agents of change. Be part of the solution to societal problems. The future of this country is in your hands."

"Also do not forget to make your parents and the country proud," he said in the minute-long clip.

Zumika and Sasha who are often mistaken as identical twins, said they are grateful to the Department of Orang Asli Development (Jakoa) for subsidising their education as this will help their single mother who is a school canteen cook.

"I am honoured to study here. I hope I can make my mother proud," said 21-year-old Zumika who is the fourth of 10 children.

Meanwhile, 19-year-old Sasha who is the fifth sibling said: "I am happy that both my sister and I are here together, enrolled in the same course and studying at the

## New study journeys

Thousands move into residential halls at the country's 20 public universities as they start their undergraduate degree programmes.



(Above) Sisters Zumika (right) and Sasha are roommates at UKM. (Right, from left) Twins Ameertra and Ameertra unpack their belongings as they settle into their respective dorm rooms at UKM.

same university."

Both expressed their thanks to UKM for offering them places and helping them to move into their dorm.

The university also arranged for its staff to take Zumika and Sasha shopping for the necessities they required prior to the orientation week.

Both girls who are on the national cricket team, will be starting classes in the Bachelor of Sports and Recreation programme under UKM's Faculty of Education.

UKM vice-chancellor Prof Dr Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukur welcomed new students to the campus.

He noted that the university was doing its best to include

Orang Asli students as well as athletes because "education is a must" for all.

"The sisters from Pos Gob are the very first people in their village to pursue tertiary education."

"It is important to build their confidence so that they can set an example for the others in Pos Gob," he said.

He said more than 72,000 students applied to UKM this year, with 4,139 places offered and 4,060 or 95% accepting the offer. Another 200 to 250 students will be included once the appeal process has taken place.

Prof Mohd Hamdi advised freshmen to be proactive in "grabbing opportunities" provided by the institution.

A total of 4,058 students comprising 2,790 females and 1,268 males, enrolled in 71 programmes during the UKM 2019/2020 intake session last Monday.

These include 400 students from the B40 segment, who will be getting aid from the university.

He said UKM's Bachelor of Business Administration was listed as one of the top 10 most sought after programmes in Malaysian public universities - which offer over 2,000 programmes collectively.

### History in the making

Identical twins Ameertra Tha Wip Sripraphan and Ameertra Tha Wip Sripraphan made history

in UKM for becoming the first pair of twins to enrol in the same programme at the same time in the same institution.

The twins who are 19, describe themselves as each other's best friends and are pursuing the Bachelor in Genetics under UKM's Faculty of Science and Technology.

"We both love Science and like to explore new things about Science!" exclaimed the pair simultaneously.

Ameertra, the elder twin and more outspoken of the two, said they chose UKM because it is one of the best public universities in Malaysia.

"We hope to excel in genetic science and become well known researchers in the future," she said.

Ameertra who is the more shy of the two, said they were born in Kedah with a lineage that includes Chinese and Thai.

Special needs student Sia Wen Quan, 19, faces his problems with determination and optimism.

When he was nine, he started having muscular and movement problems only to realise that mutation in his blood had caused inflammation of the joints that led to arthritis.

"My agility is affected but I believe that everything we encounter in life is to let us learn."

"So I still try to live mine to the fullest," said the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Software Engineering student from Sekinchan, Selangor.

Although disappointed that his close friends enrolled into Universiti Malaysia (UM), Sia maintained a positive mindset despite not getting into the same institu-



The five new students are among the 2,327 who registered at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu.



Students registering for courses in Dewan Sultan Ibrahim at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). A total of 2,568 new students registered last Sunday at its main campus in Parit Raja and the Pagoh branch campus.

tion. "My goals are simple and realistic - perform well and graduate with a good cert, get a job, and most importantly enjoy my life," he said, adding that perseverance is important.

Sia is one of the 11 differently abled students who enrolled in UPM for the 2019/2020 academic session. He joins a total of 3,882 freshmen, made up of 1,190 males and 2,692 females, who have enrolled in 83 programmes offered by 16 faculties across all of UPM's campuses.

UPM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Aini Ideris said 90 athletes were accepted into the university with several representing Malaysia in the upcoming SEA Games in the Philippines.

They are Muhammad Abdul Azim Othman (artistic gymnastics); Karishma Loganathan (netball); Navin Arikrisnasamy (taekwondo); Jabriella Teo Samuel (weight lifting); Marceeta Marlyne Marcus (weight lifting); Nur Afisa Abdul Halli (recurve archery); Andre Anura Anuar (athletics) and Muhammad Zulfiqar Ismail (athletics).

This year, Maszlee said, a special entrance stream into public universities was created for the differently abled, B40, athletes and Orang Asli.

Prof Aini revealed that about 81 students from the B40 segment have enrolled into the university.

Describing the registration process as "smooth" and "systematic", Prof Aini said UPM has been using the e-registration process since the 2017/18 intake.

"This means that students register and pay their fees online," she added.

Students also met Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, a UPM alumni during an orientation week forum, she said.

She added that besides the many activities to "break the ice", they also made pledges as new students of the varsity.

Using other people's success stories as her motivation, UPM Science in Human Development student Rema Ramli often tells herself "If others can do it, so can I".

Rema's first encounter with education was when she was in primary school - missing out kindergarten completely due to problems caused by mother nature.

Rema who is on a scholarship from Jakoa, said obtaining quality education will help transform lives.

Coming from Kampung Paya Rekoh, Pahang, she enrolled into UPM due to the recommendations from her secondary school teachers who are alumni.

One of seven siblings, she hopes to become a community development officer.

### A stepping stone

Friendly, warm-hearted and helpful. These are the three terms Farrel Pramadito, 19, used to describe his first impression of Malaysians.

The UM Business Administration student from Jakarta, Indonesia, said he chose to study away from home to be more independent.

"I am fortunate that UM accepted me as it is the best university in the country," he said, adding that Malaysia is a stepping stone to a great future.

He is one of UM's 111 international students. A total of 4,200 students enrolled into UM.

Sulaisha Manimaran, 20, who is a Malay Arts student is one of the Orang Asli students in the 2019/2020 intake.

She said it is her dream to use her knowledge gained from the university to help other children.

"I want to be a teacher and make it my duty to help educate children in the future," she said.

One of six children, she said her mother is a rubber tapper while her father passed away in April.

"I hope to make him proud of me. This is why education is so important as it is the way out from a hard life," said the former SMK Telok Panglima Garang STPM student with excellent results. This helped her to clinch a scholarship to attend UM.