

Maslinda does her community proud

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KUANTAN: As well as her own dreams, a 20-year-old girl carries the hopes of her community on her shoulders.

Maslinda Samad, from Pos Celanak Orang Asli settlement in Cameron Highlands, is the first Semai girl to be accepted into a university to study engineering.

She is also the first Orang Asli girl to be accepted by Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) in Gambang.

Accompanied by family members and close friends from her village, Maslinda came to register on Tuesday for a degree course in engineering (materials).

Her father, six brothers and sisters and 13 villagers made the five-hour journey in support of her.

"I'm here carrying the hopes of more than 200 villagers in my settlement, who were very excited to learn that I have been accepted by a university," she said.

She added that she planned to teach the children of her settlement during semester breaks.

An excited Maslinda told the *New*

Straits Times she had applied to UMP two years ago, after sitting the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination, but was not given a place as her results were not good enough.

"I thought I might stand a better chance if I sat the Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia examination, so I worked really hard at it.

"UMP was my first choice because it is the only university in the state. I also found the course outline interesting."

Maslinda, who completed Form Six at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sultan Ahmad Shah in Cameron Highlands, said it might take a while for her to adjust to campus life.

"My friends told me it's filled with exciting activities so I am looking forward to the experience."

She said she would go all out to prove that those from the Orang Asli community could also excel in life.

Her group attracted a lot of attention on campus, and UMP vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Daing Nasir Ibrahim came over to greet them.

Maslinda was one of 1,760 students who registered at UMP on Tuesday.



Maslinda Samad with Universiti Malaysia Pahang vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Daing Nasir Ibrahim (left) and her family members in Kuantan on Tuesday.