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# A new milestone

It will be a journey of a different kind for the thousands of young people who have been accepted into the various public institutions of higher learning.



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**T**HE lights went off suddenly as Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin was addressing freshies days at Universiti Malaya (UM). However, the incident did not deter the eager audience from listening to him at the hall of the varsity's Fourth Residential College.

The electricity supply was restored within minutes and all eyes were back on Mohamed Khaled who said seeing the freshies reminded him of the time when he came to UM to study law in 1978.

"I must say that the orientation I went through was so much tougher," he told the students who themselves were in the midst of a hectic week of orientation after registering at the varsity on Sept 1.

Many of the students had never left home. They came from near and far with family members in cars, vans, buses and taxis to register and start life anew.

They brought with them mops, brooms, pails, cutlery, pillows and even mattresses together with their bags and suitcases.

The UM freshies were among a total of 85,247 students registered for the new varsity intake at the nation's public institutions of higher learning for the 2012/2013 academic session.

The number included 46,698 Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia school leavers and the other 38,549 with Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia qualifications or its equivalent.

On hand to greet and help the freshies at UM were senior students one of whom was Marina Melissa Ng, 24.

She was assigned to facilitate the orientation process so that students with special needs were given extra attention at the varsity. Senior students, she said, were also



**Handle no more:** Pick Soon shows his broken bag handle while his senior at UKM Daniel Lan (left) looks on.

required to help new students fill forms and make them feel at home, she said.

Visually-impaired students for instance would get help from their seniors to familiarise themselves in the campus, said third-year student Mohammad Kahar Mustapha, 23.

"They will also get help from us (students) in reading out texts and proof-reading their assignments. We also want them to have a sense of belonging and mingle with the rest of us," he added.

Parent Nor Haizam Samsudin was confident that her visually-impaired son Mohd Shahir Ramli who is pursuing Malay Studies, would "fit in".

She said that he could do his laundry and even cook. Another of the varsity's visually-impaired postgraduate student Lim Tien Hong, said the biggest challenge was moving around and finding reference books in Braille.

"Looks like I have to depend on volunteer readers to read out the texts for me. I am fully aware of the challenges but I won't let them get in my way," he said.

UM vice-chancellor Prof Tan Sri Dr Ghauth Jasmon when receiving new postgraduate students recently, said the varsity's objective was to be among the world's top 100 universities by 2015.

## Safe and friendly campus

At Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), its deputy vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Fauzi Ramlan (Student Affairs & Alumni) said the university would not tolerate any form of ragging and bullying among its students.

"We have not received any reports of ragging or bullying in the past two or three years. However, those who are found to engage in such activities will face stern action.



**Under our umbrella:** Students taking cover from the scorching sun at the UPM grounds.

"The penalties include warning, suspension, community services and expulsion," said Prof Mohd Fauzi after meeting students who registered for the new academic year at the university last week.

There were 4,258 students who were registered for the new academic year at UPM. Among them was national archer Arif Farhan Ibrahim Putra, 21 who registered for a Human Resource degree programme.

"As an athlete, I have been trained to adhere to a high level of discipline. I will try to strike the right balance and not neglect my studies so that I can complete my programme successfully," said the sportsman, whose team won a silver medal in the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi.

Parent Chan Yee Heng, 49, said he hoped UPM would serve as a training ground for his daughter Xin Ee, 20, to be strong and independent.

Xin Ee who is pursuing Consumer Studies, said she would need a few weeks to familiarise herself with the new environment.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) welcomed 3,132 students for the new intake, of which 61% were females.

The scene at its Bangi campus was that of organised chaos as students lined up to first register and then move in at their respective residential colleges, with their belongings and families in tow.

At Kolej Ibrahim Yaacob, Fatin Nadiyah Mohamad Saberi, and Nur Fatini Mohd Yusof, both 19, only just met but their friendship is set to blossom as they have been assigned to the same residential block and will be studying Microbiology.

At the varsity's Kolej Pendeta Za'ba, freshee Nurul Amira Mokhtar said she was excited about meeting her roommate despite her initial fear.

Nurul Amira will be studying Biochemical Engineering and upon graduation hopes to pursue her master's degree.

Many students were seen lugging their bags, while others were pushing trolleys loaded with suitcases, pails and other belongings up the steep roads.

It was a mission not without "casualties". For Ling Pick Soon, it was his bag handle that broke. The 22-year-old Business Studies student from Kuching, was helped by his senior Daniel Lan, a third-year Mechanical Engineering student at the varsity.

The long, tiring day was certainly not without its hurdles for the newcomers. Nur Solehah Mohd Ashri was all ready to move in but was locked out of her room.

"I left my key in the room and my roommate has come and gone and locked the door in the process."

Siti Salmiah Ismail, 21, who will be studying Syariah Law, was accompanied by her older brother and sister.

The youngest in the family, she said she felt glad that her two siblings would not be too far away as they live in Sepang, Selangor.

On hand to greet many of the students and their families was UKM vice-chancellor Prof Tan Sri Dr Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin.

She said that students needed to increase their knowledge and involve themselves in character-building activities.

**Hello!** Mohamed Khaled speaking to some of the UM freshies.



**Moving in:** UKM freshee Siti Salmiah Ismail folds her clothes while her family members look on.

