

UiTM Sarawak admits first Penan student

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KUCHING: A Penan lass was among the 231 students admitted into Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) under its 'Mengubah Destini Anak Bangsa (MDAB).

Her name is Lonnie Jalung, 19, and the humble lady said she was honoured to be the first Penan in UiTM Sarawak.

She said she will focus on her study, passing examinations, earn her Diploma in Public Administration and become a useful citizen so that she can contribute to her country and her little community in Limbang.

"I want to become a teacher next time, I want to become someone useful. I hope I can lead a good example to my race and also my siblings," she told The Borneo Post in a telephone interview yesterday.

Lonnie who hails from Kampung Long Tegaan in Limbang scored distinction in the Malay Language and credits in six other subjects in the SPM 2009. Under the programme meant to provide education opportunities to children of poor Bumiputera earning below RM2,000 a month, the recipients will be exempted from tuition fee and be given a monthly allowance of RM100 on top of free food and accommodation.

In a press statement issued by the university yesterday, Limbang MP Hasbi Habibollah said Lonnie's admission into the university showed that any minority ethnic group could be successful in their academic pursuit as long as they were given ample opportunities.

He hoped Lonnie would become an inspiration to her community in her village to further their studies after finishing secondary school.

Meanwhile, Lonnie is the second child out of seven siblings. She said she managed to enter the university through her teacher's encouragement when she helped to apply for the course here.

"I was so happy of course because I really want to further my studies to the highest possible level. I want to help improve my family's living condition, especially my parents who had raised me up and gave me education," she said.

She said although she is far apart from her parents, they were happy, excited and proud for her and wished her the best. Back home, she said they live in poor conditions as her father is only a farmer while her mother was a full time housewife.

"We lived in hardship. We all depend on my poor father to provide food for us," she stressed.

The student from SMK Medamit said her course would take three years.