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UMS adjudged the best in national-level debate

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) debaters made their university proud when they emerged champion in a national-level debate competition yesterday.

The four-member team comprising Josephine Ong Beng Hui, Asriyah Abdul Hafid, Mohd Shukri Mohd Ariff and reserve Ramlah Osman was adjudged the best out of ten other government universities nationwide taking part in the debate.

"It is magnificent," vice-chancellor Datuk Seri Panglima Prof Dr Abu Hassan Othman stated matter-of-factly after the final which saw his students battling word-to-word with representatives from former hat-trick winners, Universiti Sains Malaysia (UMS).

"Today, we have proven that if the students study hard and the academic staff do their role well with dedication, we can be on par with other universities," he said.

The victory was made more memorable when Shukri was chosen as the best debater.

"This is unbelievable. I never expected it," said Shukri who was in tears when his team was announced as the champion.

He received a trophy and RM300 for his outstanding performance while the team, including reserve Ramlah Osman, was awarded a challenge trophy and RM3000 in cash.

Adviser Ramlah Osman said the victory was remarkable considering it was the first time a team from the UMS made it further than the first round since they took part in 1996.

"Thank God. We did not dream for this to happen during our preparation in the last few weeks but we won and this is wonderful. Very significant too because we were only in second place during our (UMS) level competition," he said.

Altogether, 11 universities took part in the ninth Environmental Debate Competition '99 but UMS had two teams in the competition which started on Aug 23.

The other team, which emerged champion at the UMS level not too long ago, however was beaten in the first round.

The other participants are from Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and Universiti Teknologi Mara.

The champion had beaten UM, UPM and UIA before proceeding into the final where they faced USM's Wan Azman Wan Mahmud, Mohd Ali Samsudin, Ghazali Mat Zain and reserve Jamilah Hj Ahmad.

The runners-up were awarded RM2,000. All the participants were given certificates of participation.

UMS, which hosted the event for the first time, made good points from their well backed argument in proposing that the *New millennium does not promise a continuous environmental harmony* - the theme of the final debate.

And when they were announced winners, the newly built and impressive lecture hall was filled with the university's anthem with the vice chancellor leading in the singing.

USM took the title a record three times consecutively from 1995-1997. The other winners were UPM, UIA and UM which won twice.

Science, Technology and Environmental Deputy Minister Datuk Abu Bakar Daud officiated the event and presented the prizes to the winners.