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2008/05/24

Contests: In search of networking brains

By : SHYLA SANGARAN

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The MMU team of (from left) Tan Wee Chun, Kho Dao Bin and Siew Voon Fei were declared overall champions.

UNDERGRADUATES from Multimedia University (MMU), Cyberjaya, proved to be the best in Cisco Malaysia Academy Council's recent search for a team of networking geniuses.

At the recent Cisco Networking Skills Competition 2008, held in Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, the MMU team was declared overall champions by the judges.

"We were challenged by real-life scenarios throughout the competition and expected to provide on-the-spot solutions based on what we have learned in class," says MMU team member Tan Wee Chun.

"It was tough but we were confident that our team would be able to secure a strong finish in the competition after an intensive two-month preparation and strong support from our lecturer."

The annual competition, which was launched in 2006, identifies young and skilful networking masterminds from local universities, polytechnics and community colleges. This year's competition recorded an over 70 per cent increase in the number of participants.

More than 255 students representing 88 groups registered for the competition, making it the biggest networking skills competition ever held in Malaysia so far.

The contest provides an opportunity for undergraduates undergoing the Cisco Networking Academy programme (NetAcad) to translate their theoretical knowledge into practical skills.

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At the same time, it creates a platform for their knowledge and proficiency to be recognised, boosting their confidence and employment value in the information and communications technology (ICT) workforce.

"We need to produce skilled and high-quality graduates who are prepared for the real world.

"This is a key element to move Malaysia up the economic chain.

"The competition illustrates the industry's commitment to produce future generations of ICT leaders," says Kumaran Singaram, managing director of Cisco Systems (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd.

The competition is divided into three categories, which consist of separate challenges for diploma and degree students.

An open category was added this year for students who completed all four modules of the Cisco Certified Network Associate curriculum under NetAcad.

The winning teams were rewarded with a certificate of achievement, a trophy and cash voucher for each member.

The panel of judges comprised Cisco Certified Internetwork Engineers, who are networking professionals with the highest level of expertise from IMS Asia Sdn Bhd, Global Knowledge Network (M) Sdn Bhd and Solsis (M) Sdn Bhd.

This year's competition garnered overwhelming support from Multimedia Development Corporation and sponsorships from Datacraft (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, Hewlett-Packard (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, Getronics Solutions (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd and Global Knowledge.

The sponsors and partners also took part in a job fair held concurrently with the contest to help companies identify potential candidates for vacancies in their organisations.

Cisco also provided retooling sessions for networking instructors.

Lecturers and educators were encouraged to discuss recent trends in networking technologies and impart the updated curriculum to students to ensure consistent quality of education.

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