A real test

The Malaysian networking masterminds from MMU (from left): Lecturer Khor with Ming Soon, Voon Fei and Dao Bin.

THREE undergraduates from Multimedia University (MMU) Cyberjaya were declared first runners-up at the recent Cisco Asia Pacific NetRiders 2008.

The team from China's Shenzhen Polytechnic emerged as overall champions and won an all-expenses-paid study trip to the United States.

The competition featured 45 participants selected from amongst the best at local networking skills competitions held in 15 countries in the Asia Pacific region.

"I would like to congratulate Team Malaysia for demonstrating the potential of our local networking talents, as well as their endurance in one of the most challenging networking skills competitions ever," said Anne Abraham, managing director of Cisco Malaysia.

"Their achievement is commendable and they have done our country proud. The Networking Academy programme is resonant with Cisco's mission to help the industry bridge the ICT skills gap within the country."

APAC NetRiders is an annual competition held by the Networking Academy to enable students to develop their ICT skills. The programme was launched in Malaysia in 2001. Since then, over 40 academies in Malaysia have implemented the programme, generating a total of 9,000 skilled technology graduates for the workforce to date.

The competition tests the capability and skill level of the participants in computer network hardware design, configuration, development, and maintenance. It It involves two levels of testing – a multiple-choice online examination, and an online network configuration carried out through a computer simulation test.

"It was a great experience to be given the chance to compete with networking geniuses from around the region," said Kho Dao Bin from MMU Cyberjaya, who is currently undergoing his industry practice at Cisco Malaysia. "The tests were challenging as they were based on real industry problems. Our achievement definitely boosts our confidence and preparedness to step into the working world."

This year's competition was conducted virtually and simultaneously for the first time over Cisco TelePresence and Cisco WebEx across different locations and time zones, with the judges based in the United States.

"It is a unique way to hold a regional competition, without having to travel to a central location," said Dao Bin's teammate, Siew Voon Fei. "I felt like being present in the same room with everyone else."

Echoing them, Teng Ming Soon said coming in second in the region would encourage him to fulfill his dream of

pursuing a career in networking.

"In five years, I hope to attain the Cisco Certified Network Professional certification, and move on to the Internet work expert certification, which is the PhD of the networking world. I will then be able to widen my horizon from

a career perspective, and contribute to the Malaysian economy," said Ming Soon.

"I am proud of my students as it proves to the world that our country can produce exceptional, world-class networking engineers," said Khor Kok Chin, the MMU lecturer

who led the winning team.

"We hope other companies in the industry will step forward and offer opportunities for students, not only to enable their capabilities to be recognised, but also complement classroom lessons and prepare them for the real world."