

Speak and be heard

FOR the 11th consecutive year, *The Star*-ESU (English Speaking Union) Malaysia Public Speaking Competition is taking off and this time it is in partnership with PKT Logistics Group Sdn Bhd.

The competition, which tests the verbal prowess of students, aims to promote the use of English among secondary and tertiary level students between the ages of 16 and 20 years old, and nurture their confidence in public speaking.

Through the years, it has also complemented the government's efforts in increasing English Language proficiency among our young, cultivating an interest in public speaking and making our students competitive internationally.

Till today, the competition continues to draw interest among young Malaysians as it provides the ideal platform for them to speak up and express their views.

Last year, Malaysian contestant, Marina Tan Hsien Wei, 18, made history when she emerged champion in the ESU International Public Speaking Competition in London, United Kingdom.

She was the first Malaysian to win the coveted competition.

In preparation for the national finals which will be held in April in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, training workshops will be held simultaneously in Menara Star, Petaling Jaya and Star Northern Hub, Penang on March 23, followed by the prelimi-



nary/semi-final rounds on April 6 at these venues.

The winner will go through a champions training camp in Petaling Jaya and will represent the country in the International Competition in London in May.

In the preliminary round, participants will start off with a three-minute impromptu speech on topics given 15 minutes in advance. They will then have to deliver a five-minute prepared speech on the theme "A house divided against itself cannot stand". Participants who qualify for the semi-finals and finals will be required to speak for five minutes on the theme "Ideas are our greatest weapons".

Contestants will be judged on the substance of their speech, style and technique, general effectiveness and the ability to answer questions from the panel of judges.

The judges will also take into consideration the speaker's body language, facial expressions and self-confidence; all of which are essential elements of a good public speaker.

Finalists will receive certificates of merit, while all other participants will receive certificates of participation.

The finalists will compete for the coveted spot of champion, to represent Malaysia in the ESU (English Speaking Union)

Gift of the gab: Marina Tan was the first Malaysian to win the international competition in London last year.



International Public Speaking Competition 2013 in London from May 13 to 17. Our national champion will compete with the *crème de la crème* of public speakers from around the world in London. The national champion will also receive public speaking training from experts, visit beautiful sights in London including Dartmouth House, home of the English Speaking Union (ESU), and become an alumnus of one of the oldest and most prestigious organisations in the world.

The English Speaking Union is an independent, non-political, educational charity with members throughout the United Kingdom, the United States and branches in 50 countries worldwide. Its purpose is to promote international understanding and human achievement through the widening use of the English Language. The Malaysian segment of the Public Speaking Competition is jointly organised by *The Star* and the English Speaking Union of Malaysia, with PKT Logistics Group Sdn Bhd as co-organiser.

For more information on the competition and workshops, contact 03-7967 1388 ext 1240/1237/1244.

More skills training for youths

THE "My Skill Village" programme, which aims at training youths in various skills, will be expanded nationwide by year-end, said GiatMara chairman Datuk Shahrudin Ab Moin.

He said youths would be trained in skills such as electrical wiring, hairdressing, culinary, and motorcycle and car repairs.

"About 500 villages in the peninsula, Sabah and Sarawak have been identified under the programme," he told reporters at the launch of the first "My Skill Village" (*Kampungku Mahir*) in Kampung Tok Machang, Raub recently.

Under the programme, GiatMara will provide short-term skill training courses that last at least two weeks in the villages chosen.

"The main objective of the training programme is to encourage youths to be self-reliant and generate their own income by capitalising on the skills acquired.

"They can also further their studies at GiatMara centres," he said, adding that the country needed over 1.4 million skilled workers by 2020. — Bernama

ADVERTORIAL

Strategy for the future

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI PETRONAS (UTP) vice-chancellor Datuk Abdul Rahim Hashim and his team at the university have a big task ahead of them, considering the goals and plans that have been outlined for the institution of higher learning.

One of Abdul Rahim's priorities as vice-chancellor – a position he assumed in November 2012 – is for UTP to be a nationally recognised research-intensive university by the end of this year. He says securing this recognition is critical, not the least because of the access to grants afforded by the recognition but more of potential collaborations with leading universities and research institutions globally.

He has also set a goal for the university's engineering programmes to be ranked among the top 80 in Asia by 2014, and for UTP to be among top 200 universities in Asia by 2015. Ultimately, the aim is for UTP to be ranked among the top 200 universities in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World Rankings by 2018.

Achieving these goals requires one thing: ensuring a superior academic programmes focusing on engineering and technology studies, and at the same time ensuring excellence in its research and development (R & D) activities.

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI PETRONAS vice-chancellor Datuk Abdul Rahim Hashim outlines the game plan for the university to become an internationally recognised academic and research institution.



In leading the university towards attaining international recognition, Abdul Rahim is cognisant of the fact that sustainability is a major priority area – in terms of the academic programmes offered and the quality of the teaching staff.

At the top of his to-do list in managing and developing the talent pipeline is identifying the DNA of successful

lecturers and professors.

"We want to ensure that we get the right people on board. So we're talking to successful professors within the fraternity to determine their attributes and traits, as well as finding out what motivates them," he says.

In managing talent, Abdul Rahim is keen for members of the academia to have a greater exposure to industry. "We want

our teaching staff to go out and network, learn as well as understand some of the issues facing industry. We want our lecturers, for example, to get professional accreditation from the respective professional bodies, and this in a way forces them to get that industry experience," he says, pointing out that such an approach also ensures that its academic staff is well-rounded and are of high calibre.

With his vast industry experience – having spent 32 years in PETRONAS in a variety of roles that include PETRONAS Oil Refinery Malacca CEO, Vice-President of the Human Resources, Gas Business and Research and Technology divisions – Abdul Rahim is also keen for the university to deepen its collaboration with industry.

"As we strive to become a research-intensive university, the collaboration with industry is crucial, and we want to deepen the collaboration," he says.

Enhancing its relationship with industry is also a critical part of ensuring the employability of its students. "As our students will be part of industry, we want the industry to come on board early, whether as part of the Industry Advisory Panel for curriculum development, or in the supervision of final year projects, and conducting

seminars and talks," he says, adding that UTP engages with some 400 companies in the oil and gas, and technology fields.

And it is this extensive industrial network, which makes UTP's seven-month internship programme such a success. "The internship programme isn't just to create awareness or expose students to industry but also allows students to undertake projects, carry out presentations, prepare reports, all of which are monitored and assessed... so this way, when they graduate they are industry-ready.

"We are also trying to get companies to come on board to sponsor students," says Abdul Rahim, adding that over the years several oil and gas companies have contributed generously to the university.

He is also keen for UTP to be more proactive in securing other means of funding. To that end, he hopes that UTP can learn from the experiences of universities in the US, which boast of large endowment funds.

Looking ahead, he hopes that the university will continue to be able to attract the best and the brightest, and at the same time for the university to be agile enough to adapt to the changes taking place in education and industry.

"We want to ensure that we get the right people on board. So we're talking to successful professors within the fraternity to determine their attributes and traits, as well as finding out what motivates them."

Datuk Abdul Rahim Hashim
UTP vice-chancellor