

Poor turnout for Merdeka public speaking competition

KUALA LUMPUR: Their pride shone through as they delivered polished speeches on nationalism and the meaning of Merdeka.

Sadly, not many shared their joy and pride of the 10 contestants, who took part in the Inter-University Merdeka Day public speaking competition.

This is because only less than a quarter of the 400 people whom the Malaysian Universities Debate Council (Madum), the organiser of the annual competition, had expected to attend, turned up.

Madum and this year's competition host, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), blamed the low turnout on "bad timing".

Madum had sent out invitations to 35 institutions of higher learning to attend the competition held at Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang.

"Many universities are busy with the mid-semester examinations now," said Madum secretary Iqbal Hafiedz Ahmed Bazari.

But all may not be lost as the event was streamed live online to 20 universities.

Among the guests at the event were Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Dr Hou Kok Chung, UiTM vice-chancellor Datuk Seri Prof Ibrahim Abu Shah, Yayasan Tunku Abdul Rahman chief executive officer Dr Tengku Abdul Aziz Tengku Zainal and Madum chairman Tajol Ariffin Adam.

There were five contestants each in the Bahasa Malaysia and English categories.

For the Bahasa Malaysia category, Mohd Shamsul Salleh (Universiti Putra Malaysia) won first prize. Mohd Izat Jonid (Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia) and Azri Zahier Azmi (Universiti Malaya) won second and third place respectively.

Zamir Hamdy (Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia) emerged the winner of the English category. Ashwin Charles (Universiti Malaysia Pahang) and Firdaus Nejim Al-Asedi (Universiti Malaya) won second and third place respectively.