

Pantun competition crowns champions



High Commissioner of Malaysia to Brunei Darussalam Dato' Raja Reza bin Raja Zaib Shah in a group photo with the winners. PHOTOS: JAMES KON



Team Universiti Brunei Darussalam 'B' delivering their pantun

James Kon

Team Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) 'B' emerged as the champion of the Higher Education Institutions Pantun Festival after beating Team Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) in the competition's final at the Pro Chancellor's Arts Centre, UBD yesterday.

High Commissioner of Malaysia to Brunei Darussalam Dato' Raja Reza bin Raja Zaib Shah was the guest of honour.

Team UBD 'B', comprising Mazfazillah bin Maikal, Awangku Md Nur Safiuddin bin Pengiran Haji Harun, Awangku Md Nur Adi Syafi Rusyduddin bin Pengiran Eliza and Hazirah binti Abang Hadzman, was up against Team UNISSA, comprising Abdul Rahim bin Haji Ledin Roslan, May Lita Wardiya Ningsih, Nurhaziqah Afifah binti Muhammad Eddy and Mohammad Hassanuddin bin Sahirol.

Mazfazillah of Team UBD 'B' was also named the Best Poet Performer.

In an interview with the *Bulletin*, Mazfazillah said, "Alhamdulillah, this was the first time that we managed to get to the final. We didn't expect to emerge as winners today.

"Most importantly, we managed to gain valuable experience from the competition."

On their preparation, he said, "We came together to discuss strategies and words that could be used for poetry.

"The words we focussed on were based on traditional culture and fruits. We collected the words first, and then discussed ideas from the words available."

Mazfazillah also highlighted the importance of preserving the tradition of *pantun* poetry.

"*Pantun* poetry is a tradition with a very long history. The younger generation needs to understand *pantun* or at least be able to perform *pantun* to keep this tradition from being forgotten."

On his passion for *pantun*, he recalled, "When I was in school, I joined *pidato* or debate competition and from there started to learn more about *pantun*.

"The content of the *pantun* can derived from current affairs as well as personal experiences."

The festival was organised by UBD's Student Affairs Division with the High Commission of Malaysia in Brunei Darussalam as well as the Language and Literature Bureau.

The competition is carried out by the Student Activities and Development Unit under UBD's Student Affairs Division and UBD Students Association (PMUBD).

The aim of the festival was to promote the culture of *pantun* in preserving cultural heritage and to test the skills of debate as well as *pantun*, and to encourage fast and critical thinking, creativity and accuracy.

Third place went to team UBD 'A' and fourth went to Team KUPU SB.

Dato' Raja Reza said, "This festival was organised with the objective of fostering an interest in *pantun* among the younger generation, especially students at higher learning institutions.

"In addition, it aimed to raise awareness on the importance of deepening and appreciating Malay traditions that have existed for centuries."

He said, "We hoped to empower and strengthen the Malay language as well as to intensify efforts in maintaining intangible culture.

"It was a historic moment on December 17, 2020, when *pantun* was included in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity following a joint application submitted by Malaysia and Indonesia."

The Malaysian high commissioner also asked, "Where is the direction of *pantun* today? Is *pantun* still relevant? Is it necessary to modify *pantun* to be in line with the current situation? Is it appropriate to use a *pantun* only as a complement or flavouring of a ceremony? Is *pantun* just used as a joke?"

He continued, "In my opinion, research on these issues must continue, although there is not much active research on *pantun*. I have high hopes that this *pantun* competition can become

the best platform for students of higher education institutions to work on and develop their talent and potential in the field of *pantun* while preserving the nation's treasured culture."