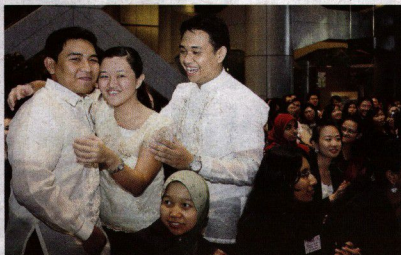




Team work: The students were expected to work in groups during a learning trip to Wan Chai.



Hugs of joy: Team Sing Terns (from left) Caesar, Mary and Eduard rejoice after they were announced overall winners.

Story and Photos by ALCYIA LIM
educate@thestar.com.my

THERE is only so much one can do in seven days and for Malaysia's Gold and Silver award winners of the HSBC Young Entrepreneur Awards (HSBC YEA) 2011, the one week spent in Hong Kong left them with an experience of a lifetime.

Both the teams together with the competition's winners and runners-up from Hong Kong, Brunei, Thailand, The Philippines, Bangladesh and Shanghai, China were on the island to witness its grand finals, as well as to take part in an entrepreneurial study tour there.

Looking a little nervous and reserved, they were soon at ease during the ice-breaking session where they got to know one another.

The finalists – Gold Award winners – from their respective countries arrived prepared with their prototype models and presentations in hand, to present their business ideas to the judges at the competition which is in its eleventh year.

With ideas ranging from an Advanced Crab Technology by Malaysian Team EcoVision from Taylor's University, to the commercialisation of a technology that increases a plant's rate of photosynthesis by Team Bye Bye Carbon from Hong Kong, the teams certainly brought to the stage presentations that were enough to impress the judges and audience.

Clinching the Best of the Best award was Team Sing Terns from the Philippines, formed by three students who met during their internship stint in Singapore.

"We were all doing our internship at P&G in Singapore when we met, so we thought that it was apt

to name our team "Sing Terns," said Eduard Edwynn Capacio, from the University of the Philippines.

Eduard, with his team members Caesar Emil Gallo, 21, and Mary Kathleen Chan, 21, came up with their project titled EContainer, which won them the Business Development Fund of HKD100,000 (RM40,000).

"Basically, our idea is to use Polylactic Acid, also known as PLA, to replace the regular PA plastic coating you find on the inner side of paper cups," said Caesar.

"Many people are not aware that paper cups, which are recyclable, actually take about 100 years before it fully disintegrates," he said. Focusing on multinational coffee companies as their starting point for marketing, the team believed that their idea was feasible but needed more help from experts in the scientific processes of PLA, as well as getting investors to participate in their project.

"We really did not expect to win prior to the competition, so winning is a bonus for us!" said Mary, who added that the entire experience itself was priceless.

Eduard said, "I believe that in this day and age, we have to take environmental concerns seriously. We really hope to take this project further."

The Diamond Award of a HK\$40,000 (RM16,000) business development fund was awarded to team Stalwarts, from Bangladesh, whose idea was to create a high-strength concrete using fibres from coconut husks to make buildings more resistant to earthquake, while the HK\$20,000 (RM8,000) business development fund from the Jade Award went to Team Vincti, from Thailand, for their idea of a boutique brand of women's shoes with an adjustable heel.

HSBC Asia Pacific corporate sus-



Budding businessmen come together

They were not all champs, but teams from the seven participating nations were still winners as they gained so much from their 'entrepreneurial journey' to Hong Kong recently.



Great group: Team members are all smiles as they get together at Ocean Park.

tainability head Teresa Au said the participants had outdone themselves this year.

"I think the students this year performed very well. Their ideas were very innovative and interesting, which was reflected in their presentations. I believe that some

of the teams may actually turn their ideas into real business propositions."

Au said that compared to previous years, there was a greater trend to focus on projects with an environmental impact this year.

"This year, we found a lot more

emphasis on climate change and the environment, which showed that the participants were very much aware about global issues that we are being faced with today."

When it came to presentations, Au said that the students had certainly learnt from the participants in previous years, and had come well-prepared especially in handling the questions by the judges.

Agreeing with Au, Hong Kong Sports Institute chairman Eric Li, who was also a judge at the competition said, "We ask questions which we already know the answer to during the question-and-answer session, because we want to see if the students are thinking 'along the same track'," he said.

He added that while it was expected that the students lacked industrial experience, they had demonstrated ingenuity in their proposals.

"All the teams did very well, and they certainly are not tied down by conventional ideas. With more fine-tuning to their ideas and help from a mentor, they would be able to go a long way."

When students from seven different countries come together for a week, cultural differences are bound to surface.

A workshop on cross-cultural communication organised by the Chinese University of Hong Kong proved to be helpful in identifying the cultural differences that were apparent and helping students understand each other better.

Apart from dissecting various case-studies on business meetings, the participants were asked to express their thoughts about each other.

Yeong Hoe Kin, from UCSI University said, "After talking to the participants from Shanghai, I learnt that China is a really advanced country."

He added that being in Hong Kong itself was an eye-opener. "People here walk very fast, even the escalators move quickly!"

But amidst their differences, participants also found many cultural similarities, such as the idea of time.

When Bangladesh participant Nusrat Sharmin Moutusi shared the notion of "Bangladeshi time"

where guests to a party are always expected to arrive two hours late, half the classroom were seen nodding in agreement.

"For example, if a wedding invitation states that it begins at 7pm, no one arrives before 9pm. Even the bride and groom arrive late!" Angie Yeung, from Hong Kong, however, shared that in Hong Kong, people always seemed to be rushing because they did not like the idea of wasting time.

"We believe that time is money. So people are always rushing because we try to do as much as we can in a day."

Paying a visit to the famous sites around Hong Kong, participants were given the chance to take in the sights of Hong Kong from Victoria Peak, before visiting the Jade and Stanley Market.

After taking a few snapshots to remember their visit, they had a taste of some local delicacies, such as the Hong Kong milk tea, as well as street snacks.

A field trip was also conducted in the district of Wan Chai, which has a mix of both the old and modern architecture.

Participants were divided into groups and given a topic to focus on, after which they were required to present their findings to the rest of the participants.

"It was interesting to know that in Wan Chai, one can find places of worship of different religions all within close proximity," said Koh Hui Kieng, from UCSI University.

But the day the participants and organisers had hoped to see sunshine turned out to be the day when a typhoon warning was issued and they had to brave through Ocean Park in raincoats!

Despite being unable to go on the rides, they managed to see the animals and visited the aquarium.

However, the most memorable



One for the album: Participants pose for a group photograph.

Ringling cheers: Malaysian team members (from left) Hui Kieng, Pei Wah, Hoe Kin, Gan Mei Lei and Lim Sher Li posing at the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited event which was part of their study tour.

part of the trip was a talk by Ocean Park Operations and Entertainment executive director Todd Houglund, when he explained the history and business strategies of Ocean Park.

To the participant's surprise, Houglund showed a chart of Ocean Park's revenue which had been on a steady increase since the year Hong Kong Disneyland was launched.

"We identified our differences, and capitalised on that, instead of looking at Disneyland as rivals," said Houglund.

For Thai participants Vorawan Wangpanitkul, Tamonwan Chen and Patanee Bovonratwet, watching the pandas was their "highlight moment" said Vorawan.

At the end of the week, participants were seen mingling and sharing stories with each other. After the official farewell dinner, the participants got together to have some local dessert before bidding good bye to the Pearl of the Orient.

"I think we learnt a lot on this trip, and meeting the team from Hong Kong made our trip extra special as we never expected to form such good friendships within this short period of time," said Chong Pei Wah of Taylors University.

She added, "Although we did not win in the regional finals, we have all learnt something new from each other in the process."

"It has been a long journey since the beginning of our participation in this competition, and for me, the competition helped me manage my time better as we had to juggle between the competition and our assignments."

Hong Kong participants Connie Chan and Bernice Chan who had forged a special friendship with the Malaysians had come to send them off at the airport, but it was only a temporary goodbye as they plan to visit the country soon.



Sweet treat: Participants enjoying their dessert at an outlet.

'Baby' in the group

WHILE most participants of the HSBC Young Entrepreneur Awards Regional Finals and Entrepreneurial Study Tour came from tertiary institutions, one participant, Mardiah Zawani Muda Yusran, 13, stood out from the rest.

Together with her sister Marzianatul Farhana, 21, they worked on a project that earned them the competition's Silver Award in Brunei.

Having both parents in the agriculture industry proved to be an asset as they helped the girls in their project "Bio-Street Light", which aimed to convert animal waste into an energy source to light up street lamps.

Mardiah who is in secondary school said that her age was no barrier as she was able to mingle and enjoy the company of the older participants.

"We connected well and were able to engage and exchange



Sisters Mardiah (left) and Marzianatul worked on the project together. Information about our culture and way of life," she added. Mardiah was also happy that she could travel with her sister on the trip.