

The final countdown



Vignesh Baboo



The participants are psyched about the national finals next month.

ing the contest.

"We want to offer students a pedagogical and professional experience within the beauty products industry.

"Many of the participants have been given internship opportunities and subsequently offered permanent employment with the company," says L'Oréal Malaysia recruitment and integration manager Vignesh Baboo.

The competition, which usually lasts about six months, enables students to work alongside the company's marketing, human resources and management teams as well as with an internationally-known advertising agency.

The event acts as a platform for students to get spotted by the multinational's executives and provides a taste of the working world.

"Looking at the five teams we identified for the national finals, it will be an exciting challenge and I am sure that this year's national winner will do Malaysia proud at the international stage where they will go up against teams from over 45 countries," says Vignesh.

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FIVE teams of undergraduates are now in the midst of preparing for a presentation next month that will see one of them representing Malaysia at an international competition.

The teams — Artentech and Montrio (both from Monash University Sunway Campus), Why Not and Excellic (both from Universiti Putra Malaysia) and Deviant (from University of Malaya) — are the national finalists of the L'Oréal Brandstorm Challenge 2013.

They beat 53 teams to make it this far.

This year's contest called for entrants to put themselves in the shoes of the Southeast Asia Zone marketing director for the brand.

In the first leg — a pre-case challenge — they had to boost the hair care and styling category by handling strategic brand positioning and innovation in 10 countries around the region.

In the second case study round, which was held in January, students had to develop their own hair care product innovation and define a strategic marketing plan to get it launched and distributed in the Asean zone.

At the national level, the finalists are expected to present their analysis of current market conditions, trends and identify opportunities for their products based on a case study.

They will be evaluated on analysis; strategic approach and coherence with the brand; communication and promotion; innovation of the proposed product; and presentation and team spirit.

The contest, which started in France in 1993 and began expanding to other countries in 1997, has a new twist this year.

While only students from partner universities could previously take

part, this year those from any institutions are welcome to try their luck in the Wildcard cycle.

Teams in the Wildcard cycle prepare their presentation videos on the pre-case study and upload their videos to the Brandstorm website for a specified voting period.

The judges will evaluate the videos and announce the national champion for the wildcard category.

The winning team will then prepare a case study presentation video to be submitted to the in-

ternational jury, who will decide on the international Wildcard category winner.

This wildcard team will then have the chance to compete at the international finals with their peers in the regular cycle.

Aside from representing Malaysia at the International Finals in Paris in June, the national winning team will also receive a travel voucher worth RM5,000, RM500 worth of products and a challenge trophy.

The first runner-up team will win

a travel voucher worth RM3,500 and products worth RM400 while the second runner-up team will receive a travel voucher worth RM2,500 and products worth RM300. Both teams will also get a challenge trophy each.

A Digital Award will also be given to the team who gains the highest number of "likes" during the Facebook-based self-marketing competition, which will be presented during the national finals.

Win or lose, though, all students would have benefited from enter-

Bright sparks

YOUNG LEADERS INITIATIVE: Four university students have been selected to represent Malaysia at the 12th Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative (HYLI) to be held in Bangkok, Thailand from July 1-5.

They are Khairunnabihah Zainal Abidin of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), Chang Su Kiat of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Ng Cheon Yuen from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Muhammad Nasrullah Annuar from Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP).

The quartet will join their counterparts from Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Japan at the regional forum themed The Road Ahead: Asean's Role In Asia And The Global Economy.

The students were selected after passing a rigorous application and evaluation process that included an interview before a panel chaired by International Trade and Industry Ministry (MITI) secretary-general Datuk Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria.

Other members of the Malaysian student selection panel included Education Ministry director-general Datuk Professor Rujhan Mustafa and SME Corporation chief executive officer Datuk Hafsa Hashim.

The students were shortlisted from seven participating universities — University of Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Taylor's University, UPM, USM, Unimas and UTP.

Established by Hitachi Ltd in 1996, HYLI aims to identify and groom potential young Asian leaders by providing a platform for bright students to discuss regional issues and establish contacts with prominent regional opinion leaders from the private, public and academic sectors.

Past guests of honour include Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean, Malaysia's former Minister of National Unity and Social Development Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail and Vietnam's former Deputy Prime



(From left) Chang Su Kiat, Khairunnabihah Zainal Abidin, Ng Cheon Yuen and Muhammad Nasrullah Annuar.

Minister Vu Khoan.

"Leaders of tomorrow should be able to think critically, have a good grasp of local and regional issues as well as possess the ability to articulate their ideas on specific issues. MITI is supportive of HYLI because it provides the opportunity for students to demonstrate their leadership abilities and potential. We hope that programmes like this will receive the support and acknowledgment that it deserves," says Sta Maria Sharifah Arfah