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Last year's GACC world inter-varsity chess championship at Universiti Malaya.

Fide event

The Rakan Muda GACC world inter-varsity chess meet at Universiti Malaya is a Fide-rated event.

MY friend – the one whom I always jibe about him being from Mars because he's so often out of touch with chess here – called me excitedly last week. "Do you want to come along? I'm aiming to play in the GACC tournament next month. It's a Fide-rated tournament."

My poor friend. He's so desperate to get his international rating. He told me that he read about this tournament from the chess-malaysia mailing list in yahoogroups but obviously, he had not read carefully enough.

His enthusiasm was deflated when I broke the news to him. "It's only for university players. This is a team event that's run by university students and meant for people who are still in university. Unless you can pass off as one, you won't be able to play," I told him.

This year, the Rakan Muda GACC world inter-varsity chess championship is already in its 13th edition. It's an annual chess event organised by the Tuanku Bahiyah Residential College of Universiti Malaya and it's going to be Fide-rated.

Started in 1996, the GACC inter-varsity chess championship has become a regular fixture in Asia's chess calendar. Through time, the championship expanded to universities in the Asean region and then to the whole Asian region.

Now, the organisers are confident enough to open the championship's doors to any tertiary education institution worldwide.

What makes this event the more remarkable is that the organisers are just UM students. It has become an annual project for them and they are helped in its organisation by the Malaysian Chess Federation.

It's a symbiotic relationship between the federation and the university students because the latter help out the MCF during the Malaysian Chess Festival and in return, the MCF provides its expertise and guidance to the students at their GACC event.

In past years, we have seen university teams coming from as far away as Russia and South Africa. We have met Mongolian and Japanese students here, as well as student visitors from the Middle East countries like Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates and Iran.

University teams from the two Asian chess power houses, China and India, have played in this tournament many times while closer to home, university teams from Asean countries have been very regular.

Of course, the support from the home teams has always been there: notably from

Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Multimedia University, Universiti Utara Malaysia, International Islamic University Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Tun Hussein Onn University College, Kolej Universiti Teknikal Kebangsaan and the organisers themselves.

Closing date for registration is Oct 20 so there is still time for local universities to submit their entries. This year's championship will run from Nov 29 to Dec 6. For more information on the 13th Rakan Muda GACC world inter-varsity chess championship, contact Yeo Soo Ee (016-606 2221 / gacc13@yahoo.com).

As I explained all this to my friend, I could see him become more crestfallen. Not wishing to see a grown man cry, I tried to cheer him up by telling him the GACC event would not be the only Fide-rated event in the country until the end of the year.

There will be at least one more but he must travel to Kuching, where from Oct 31

Nov 3 the Sarawak Chess Association (SCA) will hold their annual Sarawak open chess tournament.

SCA president Lim Kian Hwa said it has always been their intention to turn their tournament into a Fide-rated event. There aren't many Fide-rated tournaments in Malaysia so I really welcome their initiative.

Apart from the Malaysian Chess Festival in August, the only other time that we've had a Fide-rated event here in this year was the Royal Selangor open. It's a feather in the SCA's cap if they can pull it off but more importantly, a Fide-rated tournament is a great attraction to players who value the opportunity to get their international ratings.

It's not going to be easy at the Sarawak open. Although the games will be spread over four days, the second and third days of the tournament will be crammed with three games on each day – morning, afternoon and evening. That's when the competition is going to be at its toughest and it will separate those with the perseverance and those without.

Entry fee is only RM50 per player. Women and under-16 players need pay only RM25. For enquiries, contact Morsin Ahmad (012-894 9415), Mohd Reduan (019-888 7786) or Lim Kian Hwa (016-860 3180).

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