

Headline **Undergrads set to speak their minds**
Date **20. Apr 2008** Language **ENGLISH**
Media Title **New Sunday Times** Page No **20**
Section **Learning Curves** Article Size **678** cm2
Circulation **171518** Frequency **Weekly**
Readership **611000** Color **Full Color**



Undergrads set to speak their minds



(From left) Kwan, Yanti Norafizza, Rena and Yom Nurul Akmar making plans for the Ninth Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative

Four undergraduates from local public universities will represent the best young minds from Malaysia at the Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative in Jakarta this year. SHYLA SANGARAN finds out what makes them tick

COURAGEOUS, dedicated and outspoken best describe the four undergraduates who will represent Malaysia at the *Ninth Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative (9th HYL)*, in Jakarta, Indonesia in July.

They are Yom Nurul Akmar Abdul Lahsan, Rena Rajadorai, Yanti Norafizza Mansor and Alan Kwan Wai Ming, all undergraduates of local public universities.

These four successful candidates were selected from among 57 undergraduates and postgraduates from six leading public universities in Malaysia after a rigorous process which included a university shortlist, submission of written essays and panel interviews.

Consistent with the programme's concept of bringing together the best young minds from around Southeast Asia and challenging them to form ideas and plans on overcoming specific current issues affecting the region, the four Malaysians will be among the 28 top university students from Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam taking part in the *9th HYL* which will be held on July 7-11. This year's theme is *Strengthening Asian Partnerships — Economic Integration and Energy Management*.

Yom Nurul Akmar, a third-year student from the Faculty of Environmental Studies at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) says the initiative is a good opportunity for her to get her ideas across.

"I can make my opinions count when it comes to environmental issues, which are usually not given due importance," says the 20-year-old environmental science major.

Yom Nurul Akmar is active in university activities, particularly those dealing with the environment and the outdoors.

Having won a number of prizes in several parliamentary-style debating competitions both in school and at district level, Yom Nurul Akmar is resourceful, reliable, self-motivated, determined and team-spirited.

An outdoor person, Yom Nurul

Akmar's greatest passion is horse riding and playing polo. She is also an avid and accomplished participant in equestrian sport.

This year, UPM has the distinction of having two of its students representing Malaysia at the *9th HYL*.

The other UPM student is Rena, a third-year student from the Faculty of Human Ecology.

Pursuing a double degree course leading to a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in human development and a minor in information technology, Rena finds the selection process competitive.

"I had to compete with more than 40 students from UPM in addition to those from other local universities," she says.

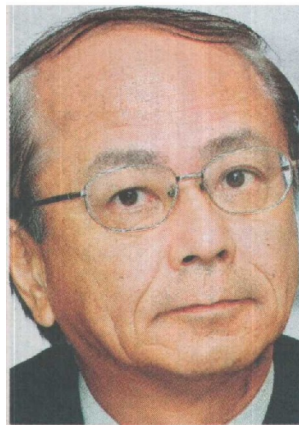
Though shy and quiet, she can be fiery when it comes to debating.

She is a member of UPM's Debate Oratory Society of Elites and she has participated both as a debater and an adjudicator in *Intervarsity Debates*.

In Jakarta, Rena will speak about energy management and alternative energy for the Asian market.

Born in Kuala Lumpur, Rena holds a brown II belt in karate-do and counts futsal, volleyball, swimming and hiking among her hobbies.

The third representative is Yanti Norafizza, 22, who is completing her degree in English Language studies, with specialisation in Teaching English as a Second Language, at Universiti



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Momota

Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).

Feeling overwhelmed and excited, Yanti Norafizza says she cannot wait to share her opinions and ideas with the other participants at the upcoming event.

"I have lots to do and I need to prepare for the big day," says Yanti Norafizza, who comes across as enthusiastic, highly motivated and committed.

She says that her parents have been supportive of her interests.

Yanti is also an active participant in the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) organisation. She was UKM's presenter for the 2006 SIFE Malaysian national competition and a SIFE Malaysia observer at the *SIFE World Cup* in Paris.

Last year, she was a member of the university's SIFE Technical team that participated in the *2007 SIFE Malaysia National Competition*.

The only thorn among the roses is Kwan from Universiti Malaysia Sabah. The 23-year-old student from the Faculty of Business and Economics is pursuing his degree in Bachelor (Honours) in Entrepreneurship, with a minor in marketing.

"Some of the issues that I will focus on the initiative include income inequality and the importance of creating an integrated market in Asia," he says.

An all-rounder, Kwan has been on the dean's list for three semesters.

Kwan loves travelling and has

participated in outdoor development training programmes as well as represented Sabah at the *National Patriotic Meet for Young Leaders*.

He also loves all kinds of sports and his inspiration is young Olympics diver Bryan Nickson. Kwan also jogs regularly and participates in short marathons.

All four representatives have singled out former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed as their role model.

At the week-long *9th HYL* event, students will participate in two morning forums, a series of closed-door workshop discussions and a Press conference to share their recommendations arising from the workshops and a community project.

Hitachi Asia (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd managing director Koichi Momota says the initiative has become a successful regional community programme that helps bring the best students together to discuss current issues from a regional perspective, a testimony to Hitachi's commitment to the communities in which it operates.

At the completion of the initiative, the 28 students of the *9th HYL* will join the alumni of previous HYLs to form a strong Asian network of future leaders.