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Journalist wins ICOM contest

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - A 23-year-old journalist took home RM50,000 after defeating 12 young composers in the first International College of Music (ICOM) Millennium Malaysian Patriotic Song Competition 2001.

Shanon Shah Mohd Sidik, who works for news portal Radiqradio, captured the hearts of judges with his song titled Kisahmu Belum Berakhir.

Azim Sulaiman Zakaria walked away with the second prize of RM20,000 for Negaraku Malaysia while Nisha Sujata Arunasalam received RM7,500 for third prize with her song, One Nation, One Land.

All prizes, including those for consolation winners, were presented by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The event was telecast live over RTM.

Earlier, vibrant music filled the air at Auditorium Perdana Angkasapuri when the young musicians vied for the honour of being the best in reflecting the tenets of patriotism through their songs.

The competition is an inaugural national music outreach initiative organised by ICOM in support of the launch of Patriotisme Alaf Baru by the Government.

Its primary objective is to encourage Malaysian youths to express their sense of patriotism and loyalty to the country through songwriting and music performance.

The competition, which is open to Malaysian youth between the age of 15 and 25, also aims to discover new music talents in Malaysia.

Consolation prize winners, who went home with RM2,500 each, were Ghazali Hassan (Ke Mercuri Jaya Malaysia), Tan Chee Meng (Demi Cinta), Azrul Sani Abdullah (Akan Ku Terus Setia), and Ahmad Sufiyan Shuib (Sayang Ku Malaysia).

Others were Brian Johnson Lowe (Our Land), Mohd Zekri Ismail (Gemilang), Mohd Kamal Kamaruddin (Paksi Diri), Mozani Ramzan Mohd Noor (Jati Diri Malaysia), and Yew Mei Yee and Law Kong Chyuan (Kita Yakin, Kita Percaya).

Among those present were Dr Mahathir's wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir and Information Ministry Parliamentary Secretary Senator Datuk Zainuddin Maidin.

Upon arrival, Dr Mahathir, Dr Siti Hasmah and the rest of the audience were treated to a musical presentation called Ibunda, a song with music that was a blend of East and West.

It depicted Malaysia as a mother uniting her children (rakyat) who each has their own personality.

Performed by a 52-member troupe, the presentation was greeted by ravenous applause. The participants then took centre stage.

While the judges - which comprised ICOM vice-president (academic affairs) Valerie Ross, vice-president (institutional development) Hanafie Imam, musician and producer Boon Tan and Positive Tone managing director Ahmad Izham Omar - tabulated the marks, a modern interpretation of the dikir barat called Dikir Rap was presented.

The vibrant and energetic Dikir Rap featured a medley of patriotic songs sung to a progressive rap tune.

The Prime Minister was presented a guitar by five pahlawan who carried it onstage. To the delight of the audience, Dr Mahathir strummed the guitar.

The night culminated with Shanon Shah rendering his winning song.

Later, Shahnnon Shah said he was "surprised, and still on cloud nine" as he did not expect to win.

"Malaysians should not deny that there are problems. We should work together to come up with ways to solve them," he said.

Shahnnon Shah said he was inspired to write the song to encourage Malaysian youth to have faith in their country.

Second place winner Azim, 24, an architecture student from Universiti Teknologi Mara, said the competition was a good move in encouraging youths to express their love for the country in a new way.

Nisha, 21, said all the contestants performed well despite being amateurs.