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watch out for the `great debate'!

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WHAT makes our Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad a world-renowned statesman? His ability to reason and argue on issues concerning developing nations in an intelligent and sensible manner, enabling even laymen to grasp what he is saying.

It is easy to see why the art of debating is ' important. This does not apply only to politicians but also everyone because it helps a person to express his views .persuasively, and teaches him to be open to constructive criticism. It is a good means to build liberal attitudes and resolve conflicts as well as ensure lasting peace.

These reasons prompted the Malaysian Multimedia University (MMU) to make a bid to host the exclusive Australasian `Debating Intervarsity Championship, better known as the Australs, and it won the chance to do so by 21 votes to three.

The Australs is the largest 3-on-3 debating. championship in the world and the second' largest, international debating event in the world. Once a year, it brings together more than 500 students from over 40 institutions from all over Asia and Oceania in one special - venue for nine days of debating.

Organised by the Debating Society of MMU, known as VoicesMMU, the tournament also hopes to create more awareness of efficient usage and proficiency in the English language.

This is only the second time in 10 years that this tournament has been hosted here. Previous hosts have been Melbourne' University Australia (2002), Monash University Australia; (2001), Nanyang Technological University Singapore (2000) and University of, Wellington New Zealand (1999).

Chief adjudicator Logandran - Balavijendran, better known as Logan, says the Australs debating format is unique as it has no Points Of Information and allows the longest speaking time of eight minutes per person compared to seven minutes for the Worlds and All-Asians tournaments.

"It is widely regarded as a tough tournament featuring high quality debating and adjudication, thanks to the Aida (Australasian Intervarsity Debating Association) adjudication. standards."

Logan and his team mate, Suthen Thomas, did MMUU proud earlier this year when they broke into the top league with 25th placing at the World Championships.

It was the second time a Malaysian university had made it to the top 32 and the only occasion when it was an all-Malaysian team. The first local university to do so was the International Islamic University Malaysia (IUM) in 2000.

The Austral's reputation has been enforced by the fact that three out of the past five winners of the World Championships have come from the Australasian region.

Temed "Power of the Spoken Word", the event is under "the patronage of Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, the Chancellor of MMU. Sponsors include Telekom Malaysia, Rakan Muda, Tourism Malaysia, the Australian High Commission, Siemens AG and Royal Selangor Pewter.

The tournament is divided into two parts: seven rounds of preliminaries and four knockout rounds. The preliminary rounds will be held at MMU Cyberjaya campus while the break rounds will be held at special venues in Kuala Lumpur,

This event is open to the public and entrance is free. Those interested in catching this nine-day debating extravaganza, can drop by MMU between July 4 and July 6 anytime between 11am and 6pm to catch the preliminary rounds.

Log on to [www.mmuaustrals.com](http://www.mmuaustrals.com) for further information.