

## BENJAMIN WONG DOES COUNTRY PROUD, EMERGES AMONG TOP TEN PARTICIPANTS AT IBB 2016

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KUBANG KERIAN, 5 July 2016 - A student from SMK Methodist, Sibu, Sarawak, Benjamin Wong Yi Ren, 16, did the country proud by emerging among the top ten participants at the International Brain Bee (IBB) Championship 2016 competition held in Copenhagen, Denmark on 30 June to 4 July 2016. Benjamin represented Malaysia at the competition after winning the Malaysian Brain Bee Challenge (MBBC) Grand Final 2016 that took place from 4 - 5 May 2016 at the School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Health Campus here.

The annual IBB showcases the best high school students in the field of neuroscience from around the world, with the aim of motivating young men and women to learn about the human brain and to inspire them to enter exciting careers in research and clinical brain sciences.

Hosted by the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS) at the 10th Forum in Copenhagen, Benjamin's achievement was quite remarkable as he has to compete with another 25 National Student Champions in five tough competition sections during the four days of competition.

In fact, his achievement was the best ever achieved by a Malaysian since USM became a member of the International Brain Bee Consortium in 2012 based in University of Maryland, the United States.

The MBBC 2016 coordinator who is also the project leader of Brain **Bee@USM**, Associate Professor Dr. Muzaimi Mustapha from the Department of Neurosciences, School of Medical Sciences USM said, we are proud of Benjamin's achievement as he has performed very well and has put Malaysia in the world map in the competition.

'Prior to this, Malaysia's best achievement was at the IBB 2014 held in Washington D.C., the United States where we finished in 14 position,' he said.

Muzaimi added that among the countries that took part were Germany, the United States, Italy, Iran, Romania, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Poland, Israel, Singapore and England.

'IBB 2016, the 18th edition, was won by Ana Ghenciulescu of Romania, while second place went to Canada and third placing to the United States. The top prize came with a USD 3,000 scholarship, IBB Trophy (held for 1 year), and Summer Research Internship coordinated by the Society for Neuroscience.

'IBBC 2017 is scheduled to be held in the United States in July next year,' he said.

'Benjamin's expenses to Copenhagen, Denmark was borne by USM, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Bawang Assan Community Service Centre, Yayasan Sarawak's Education Development Centre and P194 Petra Jaya Service Centre Sarawak,' said Muzaimi.

Muzaimi explained further that each participant that represented Malaysia at the IBB would automatically become a 'Brain **Bee@USM** ' alumnus.

'Application to become a 'Brain **Bee@USM**' alumnus will also be extended to participants who have joined the competition at the national level and showed continued interest in the field of Neuroscience.

'We will also try to expand the participation of next year's MBBC to provide opportunities for more students to participate at the national level as well as to attract other universities and corporations to collaborate with USM,' he added.

MBBC is an educational initiative under the **BrainBee@USM Flagship** Engagement Project through a supportive grant from the Division of Industry and Community Network (BJIM) USM, and in partnership with Kelantan Neuroscience Network Society, Centre for Neuroscience Services and Research (P3Neuro) Health Campus USM, Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and Taylor's University.