UNVEILING DATA SCIENCE TALENTS

The Star

Winners all: The champion, first and second runners-up posing for a group photo with Hamidah and Bururu (fifth and fourth from right), Sheikh Manzoor (second from left), and Ng (left) at the prize presentation.

THE CIMB Group is embracing data analytics for business in a big way.

Through its inaugural CIMB Data Science Challenge, the financial group has unearthed a strong pool of talent with the potential to become promising data scientists here.

The competition was organised in collaboration with SAS Malaysia and endorsed by the Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC).

The challenge was open to penultimate and final year students from Malaysian universities in quantitative or computer science-related studies.

Teams submitted a video stating why they want to participate, as well as why they should be shortlisted.

Students were given the task of building predictive models and proposing data-driven business solutions to strengthen CIMB's ability to cross-sell products and enhance customer experience.

A problem-solving activity also tested the students' knowledge and application of data preparation and data mining.

After two gruelling days of problem solving and presentations, six teams emerged as winners.

Team DatActuary from Sunway University emerged as champion, sweeping the top prize of RM12,000. The first runner-up was Team MoCHA from Multimedia University while Team CLS of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak was the second runner-up.

Team 3PM from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Team DareDevil from Universiti Sains Malaysia and Team Analygent of Universiti Teknologi Mara were named third, fourth and fifth runners-up respectively.

CIMB Group Group Chief People Officer Hamidah Naziadin said: "I am pleased that the CIMB Data Science Challenge 2016 is not just a competition but also an excellent platform for solid training for students in the use of the SAS system and the techniques of problem solving via data analytics."

The top six teams also receive internship opportunities, with a possibility of being employed by CIMB later.

CIMB will make the challenge an annual event for university students.

SAS Malaysia managing director Andrew Tan said: "Our advanced analytics solutions, coupled with CIMB's initiative to discover exceptional analytics talent will help organisations like CIMB stay ahead of the game.

"Data scientists today are expected to not only manage and analyse data, but also understand its utilisation in facilitating better business decisions, making this challenge both highly relevant and timely," he said.

MDEC chief operating officer Datuk Ng Wan Peng said: "Big data analytics is one of MDEC's key focuses in helping Malaysia become a high-income nation."

Also present at the ceremony were CIMB Berhad's head of digital banking and decision management Richard Bururu and SAS Malaysia's sales operations executive director Sheikh Manzoor Ghani. More on SAS is found at *www.sas.com*.