

Unimas undergraduates row off with trophy

TBP Mon 22 Oct '07 P10

KUCHING: A group of undergraduates from Unimas yesterday emerged champion in the Padawan Fest River Safari, participated by a record 100 teams.

The undergraduates clinched the top three positions in the mixed category, outpacing others who came from as far as Nigeria and US.

The fastest team of Unimas Elite rowed through more than 26 kilometres of treacherous waters, taking one hour 28 minutes to complete the course.

Compare this to the team of Rescue 991 under another category which took three hours and 29 minutes.

An official pointed out to The Borneo Post prior to the race that a standard run time would be about two hours.

Meanwhile locals capitalised on their home ground advantage by topping the list in the remaining categories.

The National Kenyah Association of Sarawak won in the female category while Manbang Air in the men's category.

This year's fourth annual Padawan Rafting and Kayaking Festival recorded its highest number of participants with teams from Australia and England.

Organising secretary Rangen Jamang said the competition had grown from just 30 teams in 2005 to about 100 this year, and organisers expect more next year.

"We're very excited about locals and foreigners taking to this event so well," said Rangen.



MIXED CHAMP: Tan (right) hands over the first prize for the mixed category to Unimas Elite team.

"In fact, when we started in 2004, we hadn't bothered to keep any record!"

Overall about 400 participants entered the competition this year.

The venue was Kampung Git, about an hour's drive from Kuching. Some camped overnight at Kampung Danu. The success of the festival has prompted the government to consider building a car park to accommodate a bigger crowd next year.

"The government is keen to build a car park here so Kampung Git can continue to hold this competition," said Environment and Public Health Minister Datuk Michael Manyin Jawong in his closing speech.

Another surprising fact revealed was that this year's competition

only cost about RM20,000 to organise. And the relatively small cash prizes did not seem to dampen the enthusiasm of the competitors.

Padawan Municipal Council chairman Tan Joo Phoi said the local authority had noticed many kayakers along the Sarawak Kiri River on weekends and public holidays.

"We are lucky to live in this beautiful and healthy environment," Tan said. "And due to the abundance of nature's beauty, the council wants to develop this festival into a tourism product."

He said it promoted healthy living next to well-planned development.

Guests at yesterday's closing ceremony included Bengoh assemblyman Dr Jerip Susil.