

Passion for language pays off for champions

By **AUDREY DERMAWAN** - November 6, 2023 @ 7:10am



Pidato Antarabangsa Bahasa Melayu Piala Perdana Menteri champions (from left) Gulzoda Utkurova, Muhammad Mukhlisul Mubin Julasapiyah and Carla Goncalves de Oliveira Sarmento.

GEORGE TOWN: Dedication and passion for the Malay language paid off for Gulzoda Utkurova of Uzbekistan and Carla Goncalves de Oliveira Sarmento of Timor-Leste, who emerged as champions in the Pidato Antarabangsa Bahasa Melayu (PABM) Piala Perdana Menteri 2023 finals at Universiti Sains Malaysia here on Saturday.

Utkurova won in the International category, while Sarmento was the winner of the International Students in Malaysia category. They each received RM10,000, a trophy and certificate.

A third category, Alam Melayu, was won by Malaysian Muhammad Mukhlisul Mubin Julasapiyah, who received the same prize.

For Utkurova, 19, and Sarmiento, 33, learning the Malay language was a rewarding experience.

"It was not difficult mastering the Malay language.

"In fact, it was one of the easiest languages to learn.

"I want to thank my teachers for introducing me to this beautiful language and guiding me for the past two years.

"I also depended a lot on the Internet and YouTube channels.

"I am so happy to emerge as the champion.

"This is my first participation and I came out on top," Utkurova said.

She is studying philology at Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies in Uzbekistan.

Besides the Uzbek and Malay languages, Utkurova also speaks Russian and Chinese.

Sarmiento, who is pursuing her doctorate in chemistry at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), said she has been studying the Malay language for the past five years.

"Although it is a foreign language, it is very easy to learn. The language is commonly used in Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and Singapore.

"I am happy to be able to share my experiences in Timor-Leste with my Malaysian friends here using the beautiful Malay language.

"I want to thank UMS and my friends here for supporting me."

This is Sarmiento's second participation in PABM, with her first in 2021, where she was among the top 10 contestants.

Mukhlisul, 22, a law student at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, emphasised the importance of the Malay language, just like other languages that have been modernised.

"The Malay language is a beautiful language and we must do all we can to preserve and promote it," said the Melaka-born student.

Eighty contestants from 23 countries took part in PABM 2023, and nine made it to the finals.

Present to close PABM 2023 was Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin.

The first runner-up received RM8,000, a trophy and a certificate, and the second runner-up RM5,000, a trophy and a certificate.