

Wildcards walk away winners

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Being rank outsiders, it was a tense 60 minutes that Rutwik Vishwamitre and Maulik Jain faced in the final round of the Tata Crucible Campus Quiz at the Shine Auditorium last Friday.

The National University of Singapore students were taking part in the Singapore leg of India's most popular quiz for the first time.

They had prepared well but were not sure of their chances in the final round as the standard was high and the other seven teams, comprising students from other universities in Singapore, were knowledgeable and fiercely competitive.

Besides, they were one of the wildcards to enter the final round.

"It was quite challenging," said Rutwik, a third year mechanical engineering student.

"The questions involved a lot of analysis and lateral thinking. We had to play it safe."

The pair built an initial lead by answering three questions which they were confident of and then desisted from taking unnecessary risks as most of their rivals floundered trying to catch up with them.

Teams incurred minus points if they got their answers wrong.

"Our strategy of not taking risks worked," said Maulik.

"Nobody could come quite close to us as we won comfortably."

"It was an exciting quiz and it would have been terrible if we had not finished among the top two as we had prepared hard for nearly a year."

Rutwik and Maulik, who totalled 300 points, received a cheque for \$7,000 and entered the quiz's international finals which will be held in Mumbai in April.

The finals will have teams from India, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates.

Singapore Institute of Management's Shalini Gupta and Harshita Garg will comprise the other team from Singapore.

They needed a tie-breaker to pip Yale-NUS College's Andre Wong and Nicholas Koh to second place and the \$3,000 prize money in the Singapore leg last week after both teams finished on 150 points.

"This is definitely the most prestigious quiz in Singapore," said Shalini, a banking and finance undergraduate who won the event last year with another partner.

"There were more than 250 participants this year and the competition is getting really tough."

"Harshita was nearly in tears as at one point it seemed like we would not make it to the finals in India. It was really close and my heart was beating fast as we had done a lot of research and reading."

The Tata Crucible Campus Quiz, which made its debut in Singapore in 2007, is essentially an invigorating business quiz. But participants have to be well-versed in world and current affairs too.

"It gives a great opportunity to use contextual knowledge," said Andre, a



(From left) Second-placed Shalini Gupta and Harshita Garg, Tata Sons' K.V. Rao, MP Vikram Nair, winners Maulik Jain and Rutwik Vishwamitre, quizmaster Giri Balasubramaniam and third-placed Andre Wong and Nicholas Koh. PHOTO: TATA SONS

third year history student at Yale-NUS.

"You need to train in lateral thinking and get to collaborate with a classmate. You have to derive a lot from words and images."

The quiz, organised by the India-headquartered global enterprise Tata Group, is hosted by noted Indian quizmaster Giri Balasubramaniam, popularly known as Pickbrain, whose sense of humour and breadth of knowledge have earned him several accolades.

"The Tata Group's philosophy dictates doing things beyond business, like engaging with the community at different levels," said Mr K.V. Rao, resident director (Asean) at Tata Sons.

"This quiz, created in India in 2004, is a beautiful entry point for the group to engage with the youth."

"It recognises creativity among students. When you do things beyond your core studies, your mind literally opens up to more knowledge."

"You tend to react much better and will be able to operate more successfully in the world."

"The 13th edition of the quiz in Singapore saw a diversity of participants, including students from other Asean countries."

For Mr Sreekanth Gundumalla, a five-time winner of the corporate section of the Tata Crucible Quiz in India (Singapore has only the segment for students), watching the show unfold at the Shine Auditorium was "enjoyable as well as enriching".

"You learn something new all the time," said the learning and development professional who will be joining a company in Singapore soon.

"It is so well organised that it motivates you to take part again and again."

Member of Parliament Vikram Nair, who was the chief guest and gave away the prizes, was also impressed.

"This is a great tradition to encourage because it encourages learning," he said.

"The quiz questions are difficult. I did not know the answer to any one of them. So I admire how the students prepare for it. It is really great that our young people are able to take part in it."

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– National University of Singapore student Maulik Jain