

CHAMPIONS OF STATES VIE FOR NATIONAL CHAMPION TITLE

Kuala Lumpur, July 23, 2011 – The 28 state champions of the RHB New Straits Times National Spell-It-Right ('SIR') Challenge battled it out for the National Champion titles of Primary and Secondary Schools categories at the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka today.

The National Final challenge was graced by Yang Amat Berhormat Tan Sri Dato' Haji Muhyiddin bin Haji Mohd. Yassin, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia who is also the Minister of Education. Also present were Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman of The New Straits Times Press (M) Berhad (NSTP); Datuk Haji Faisal Siraj, Chairman of RHB Islamic Bank Berhad; Dato' Anthony Firdaus Bujang, Chief Executive Officer of NSTP; Dato' Zainul Arifin Mohammed Isa, Group Managing Editor of NSTP and Dato' Syed Nadzri Syed Harun, Group Editor of New Straits Times.

This year, a total of 3,647 students from 638 schools took part in the competition. Breaking down the figures further, the competition saw participation from 1,416 primary school students from 272 schools and 2,231 secondary school students from 366 schools.

The SIR 2011 Challenge had widened its reach to include students from private schools that observes the national education system in addition to government-funded schools. The organisers hope this will help raise the standard of the competition and give more students the opportunity to be a part of this exciting competition.

The 2011 competition also accepted registration of participants not only from school principals or teachers but also from participants' parents or guardians and the maximum number of participants per school is ten students, on a first-come, first-served basis.



Datuk Haji Faisal Siraj, Chairman of RHB Islamic Bank Berhad (fifth from left) & Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman of The New Straits Times Press (M) Berhad (NSTP) (Seventh from right) with the winners of the RHB New Straits Times National Spell-it-right (SIR) Challenge celebrating their victory.

In his welcoming address, Group Editor of New Straits Times, Dato' Syed Nadzri Syed Harun said, "With the Sir Challenge, it is our hope that more students will be motivated to increase their English lexical knowledge as words are essential building blocks to excellent verbal and written communication."

"RHB thrives in the forefront of the development of children – we believe in nurturing the young minds at an early age and this challenge has given the Group the perfect platform to do so," said Datuk Faisal Haji Siraj, Chairman of RHB Islamic Bank Berhad.



News Room

At the National Final challenge today, state champions for both categories had to undergo the preliminary round in their respective categories. Seven spellers then are selected for the semi-finals with only five spellers being shortlisted for the finals to vie for the National Champion title.

For Primary Schools Category, the National Champion receives RM10,000.00, 2nd prize winner receives RM5,000.00, 3rd prize RM4,000.00, 4th prize RM3,000.00 and 5th prize RM2,000.00. For Secondary Schools Category, the National Champion receives RM15,000.00, 2nd prize winner receives RM10,000.00, 3rd prize RM8,000.00, 4th prize RM5,000.00 and 5th prize RM3,000.00. Besides cash prizes, the top 5 winners also received a trophy each while the rest of the finalists were awarded certificates of participation.

Thirteen pre-recorded television episodes of the challenge are scheduled to be aired on TV3 every Saturday at 7.00pm from September 17 until December 10, 2011.

About the RHB New Straits Times National Spell-It-Right Challenge 2011

This nationwide spelling competition is jointly organised by the New Straits Times and RHB Banking Group as a corporate social responsibility exercise. It was inceptioned in 2008 with the objectives to foster English proficiency among young Malaysians and to promote the use of the newspaper as an educational tool. Since 2010, the competition received endorsement from the Ministry of Education.

The competition accepts British and American English spelling. It is divided into two categories; Category 1 for Primary Schools (Year 1 to Year 6) and Category 2 for Secondary Schools (Form 1 to Form 5).

There are two challenge stages; State Challenge and National Challenge. In the State Challenge, students undergo preliminary elimination rounds before qualifying for the state final round where they compete for the State Champion title. The nationwide State Challenge for SIR 2011 has started from April 8, 2011 and has ended on June 26, 2011.

At the National Challenge, fourteen State Champions of each category compete for the National Champion title.

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About the RHB Banking Group

The RHB Banking Group is the fifth largest fully integrated financial services group in Malaysia. The Group's core businesses are streamlined into seven Strategic Business Groups (SBGs): Retail Banking, Business Banking, Group Transaction Banking, Corporate & Investment Banking, Islamic Banking, Global Financial Banking and Group Treasury. These businesses are offered through its main subsidiaries - RHB Bank Berhad, RHB Investment Bank Berhad, RHB Insurance Berhad and RHB Islamic Bank Berhad, while its asset management and unit trust businesses are held under RHB Investment Management Berhad. RHB's Global Financial Banking Division includes commercial banking operations in Singapore, Thailand and Brunei. The Group also has a non-ringgit based offshore funding operations in Labuan as well as a representative office in Vietnam. It is RHB Banking Group's aspiration to deliver superior customer experience and shareholder value; and be recognised as one of the top financial services group in the ASEAN Region.

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