

NUS wins a top prize at global law contest

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The NUS law team that won one of the top awards (from left): Mr Seow Tzi Yang, Ms Sarah Lim Hui Feng, Ms Shirin Chua and Mr Nicholas Lim Kah Hwee. -- ST PHOTO: MUGILAN RAJASEGERAN

A TEAM from the National University of Singapore (NUS) won a top prize in a global law competition, beating the competition from Harvard University, Oxford University and Beijing Foreign Studies University, among others.

The NUS foursome took the Richard R. Baxter prize - the top award for the submissions of written legal arguments in a dispute between two fictitious states over sovereignty of an island.

Over 500 law schools from 80 countries took part in the prestigious Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition - the world's largest moot court contest, now in its 52nd year.

The Singapore winners were Mr Nicholas Lim Kah Hwee, 25, Ms Sarah Lim Hui Feng, 23, Ms Shirin Chua, 23, and Mr Seow Tzi Yang, 25.

All but Mr Seow have graduated. Mr Seow, a top student in his third year, is pursuing a master of laws degree at New York University (NYU) under an NUS-NYU dual degree programme.

The team's win was NUS' fifth in close to three decades. The last time it won was 14 years ago.

Its first - and probably its best - win in 1982 came from a team formed by Mr V. K. Rajah, Mr Steven Chong, Mr Davinder Singh and Mr Jimmy Yim, all of whom have become top legal minds here.

Justice Rajah now sits on the Court of Appeal, Justice Steven Chong is a High Court judge, Senior Counsel (SC) Davinder Singh is the chief executive of Big Four law firm Drew and Napier and SC Jimmy Yim is its managing partner.

That 1982 team set a record believed to have been unequalled by any other NUS team.

It not only won the Baxter Award but also the overall title after the oral presentation rounds and Mr Davinder Singh was named best overall speaker in the competition.

This year's team went to Washington for the final oral presentations in March.

The competition involved an international law suit between two fictitious states - Aspatria and Rydal - before the International Court of Justice.

The case challenged the participants to argue which state had sovereignty over an island, and how the international investment issues which arose from the dispute should be resolved.

Mr Seow and Ms Chua represented Aspatria and co-authored the arguments which were judged as the best entry by a panel comprising two former presidents of the International Court of Justice and the legal adviser to the US State Department.

The winner of the best arguments for Rydal came from the Australian National University (ANU), which beat NUS' fifth placing. ANU also emerged overall champions. The results were announced last month.

Mr Seow said yesterday: 'We thank our coaches, Professor Lim Lei Theng and Ms Hapreet Kaur Dillon, and we are also grateful to Judge of Appeal Chao Hick Tin, Professor Tommy Koh and SC Davinder Singh who

judged our practice moots here before we flew off for the finals.'

Commenting on the wins, Mr Singh said yesterday: 'NUS has had a remarkable record at the Jessup Moot.'

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