SMU places 2nd in moot court contest

By IAN POH

A TEAM of final-year law students from Singapore Management University (SMU) has taken second place at the world's largest moot court contest - in the university's first attempt.

They beat teams from Italy, Israel, Indonesia and Argentina but finally lost to the National Law School of India University on Saturday, emerging as runners-up at the Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition.

It was Singapore's first appearance in the final since 2004 and very nearly the Republic's fifth win, which would have ended a barren spell dating back to 2001. It was also SMU's first shot at the international rounds in Washington DC, after it beat the National University of Singapore (NUS) in February's national round.

The teams represented two fictitious countries disputing the consequences of one of their territories being submerged by rising sea levels. They presented arguments and answered questions from a panel of three judges from the International Court of Justice.

Team captain Liu Zhao Xiang, 24, said the team would not have done anything differently. "It was a remarkable journey. This was a spectacular team."

Also on the team were Ms Chong Hui Ying, 23, Mr Kenneth Tan and Mr Shaun Pereira, both 24, and Mr Aleksandar Georgiev, 22.

Reaching the final when it was the school's first crack at the international rounds was something to be proud of, said team coach Chen Siyuan, 30. He said standards had become stiffer since he took part in Jessup as an NUS student in 2007. He stressed that healthy rivalry between SMU and NUS aside, the real goal was to keep Singapore "at the top in the international mooting stakes".

He said securing such results in international competitions like Jessup sends a signal to the world that Singapore's legal minds are the very best.

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Notable Jessup alumni include Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Senior Counsel Davinder Singh and Attorney-General Steven Chong.