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Russia Crowns its Most Beautiful Woman

By Lena Smirnova

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Eighteen-year-old Elmira Abdrazakova from western Siberia waving after winning the “Miss Russia” pageant. **Maxim Shemetov**

If the bickering jury is any indication, the Miss Russia contest is never easy to judge. This year the top prize went to an 18-year-old student from Mezhdurechensk, Kemerovo region.

Participating under the unlucky number 13, Elmira Abdrazakova beat out 49 other candidates on Saturday for the coveted title "Miss Russia 2013," $100,000 in prize money, a car and the right to represent Russia in the Miss Universe and Miss World pageants.

In addition to these prizes, the winner got to try on the most expensive crown in the history of beauty pageants. Made out of white gold and decorated with pearls and diamonds, the kokoshnik-inspired headpiece costs an estimated $1 million.

"It is impossible to describe what I'm feeling right now," Abdrazakova told RIA-Novosti after her victory. "I can't believe what is happening to me. When they announced the names of the first and second runner-ups, I got disappointed that this was it."

The decision caused some turmoil among the jury members who sat in a discussion room for a long time to debate the final decision.

"There were fierce battles. Not everyone agrees with the final choice," said singer and jury member Dmitry Malikov after the jury returned to the concert hall. "There was no clear winner this time."

Besides Malikov the jury included Miss Universe 2012 winner Olivia Culpo, Miss World 2012 winner Yu Wenxia, CEO of Axel Springer Russia Regina von Flemming, restaurateur Arkady Novikov, fashion designer Valentin Yudashkin and tennis player Anastasia Myskina.

The Russian public could vote online with each of their votes equal to that of one of the jury members.

Anastasia Yazykova from Yaroslavl was crowned the first runner-up Miss Russia 2013.
The third prize went to Irina Tumanova from Kalmykia republic. Both women will get grants to study in any university in the world as part of their prize.

The televised repeat of the pageant final Miss Russia 2013 will be broadcast on NTV channel on March 8.

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