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Malaysian invention's global reach

Group signs MoU with Chinese firm intent on buying its multi-purpose rescue vehicle

story by
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LOCAL startup WKL One Group, which has been working to commercialise its multi-purpose rescue vehicle (MRV), signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with China-based fire protection and search-and-rescue equipment supplier Wellcrown International Resources Ltd.

WKL One Group managing director Datuk Azman Yusoff said the MoU marked a milestone in the company's progress to showcase Malaysia's invention to the world. "Our MRV's multi-tasking rescue functions are ready to serve the world when natural disasters strike," he said.

Some of the capabilities of the MRV include being able to operate while submerged in water up to 1.8m, using underwater sonar to navigate. It also has a water-proof

generator producing 30kW of electricity and the vehicle generates enough torque to pull and push up to 70 tonnes of equipment.

Witnessed by Deputy Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti) Minister Datuk Dr Abu Bakar Mohamad Diah, the event in Putrajaya saw the attendance of representatives of various companies in the search-and-rescue equipment industry, including from Indonesia, Canada, the United States, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Australia.

The MoU states Wellcrown's intent to purchase MRVs when they are commercially ready.

"The units must be ready for vehicle certification and testing. Our factory and assembly lines must also be ready for site visit and inspection by them (Wellcrown), which we anticipate will be at end of the year," said Azman.

Revealing that the company was currently looking for a manufacturing site of about 4ha in Malacca, he said they were also looking for funding from both government and private sectors.



(From left) Low, Azman, Dr Abu Bakar, Wellcrown International Resources Ltd president Bai Yun Fei and Wellcrown International Resources Ltd business development vice-president Leelee Khoo after the MoU signing ceremony.

"The project will require about RM120mil. We intend to sell each unit for about US\$500,000, depending on the specifications. And we see China and Europe as potential markets," he said.

The MoU also includes appointing Wellcrown as the main distributor and strategic partner in China, Indonesia, Vietnam, South Korea,

Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan.

"Wellcrown will exclusively undertake all sales, marketing and support within those territories," Azman said.

The MRV will also be fitted with Wellcrown's fire-fighting, tactical, search-and-rescue equipment, he added.

The MRV is the brainchild of

founder and technical director Datuk Seri Low Wai Koon, who started his working life as a mechanic in 1988 after having dropped out of school to pursue his interest as a car mechanic.

Between 2009 and 2010, the company produced three prototypes with the assistance of a RM2.2mil grant from Mosti.

Firefighters on red alert

Fire and Rescue Department monitoring current dry spell

By ROYCE TAN

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PETALING JAYA: The Fire and Rescue Department is keeping close tabs with the Malaysian Meteorological Department on the dry spell.

Its director-general Datuk Wira Wan Mohd Nor Ibrahim said it was just the early stage of the dry season and it was not expected to last long.

"There are a few occurrences of forest fires but it is not that serious.

"We have enough personnel to face any situation. We're monitoring closely.

"If the situation becomes more serious, I will get the personnel nationwide to be on standby and maybe we will even freeze their leave until everything is under control," he said yesterday, adding that there were around 14,000 firemen in service nationwide.

In terms of equipment, Wan Mohd Noor said the department was also well prepared with additional pumps, hoses, generator sets and lighting systems purchased last year.

He advised members of the public to stop open burning and smok-

ers not to simply throw their cigarette butts.

"A fire will not start by itself. Most of the time it is due to human activities.

"The fire spreads really fast during this season especially so let's be more responsible to prevent this from happening," he said.

On Sunday, *The Star* reported that the country's fire alert map was covered almost entirely in red - the highest warning - for the coming days.

A map of the Malaysia Fire Danger Rating System, under the "Fine Fuel Moisture Code", has

nearly all parts of the peninsula in red, with the exception of a few places, including Kuching, which ironically, is currently hit by floods.

Although there may be occasional rains, these are not heavy enough in the dry season.

Red represents extreme ease of ignition and flammability of grasslands and bushes.

Large portions of Sarawak and Sabah are now also covered in red on the map.

Only a few parts of the peninsula's east coast, south of Sarawak and northern Sabah are spared.

State dept freezes all leave for firefighters

KOTA KINABALU: The leave of 900 firefighters in Sabah has been frozen in light of the spike in open burning throughout the state due to the ongoing dry weather.

The number of open burning incidents - including forest and bush fires - had jumped from 188 in January to 431 between Feb 1 and Feb 24, said state Fire and Rescue Services Department director Nordin Pauzi.

According to the department's statistics, the highest number of calls on open burning were in the west coast Papar and interior Keningau districts totalling 66 and 65 respectively in February.

The department also responded to 41 calls on open burning within the Kota Kinabalu area during the same period, 39 calls in Penampang and 36 reports in Papar.

"The open burning around Kota Kinabalu and Penampang are usually near housing area while those in Papar and Keningau are adjacent to farms," Nordin added.

He said most of the open burning in Sabah comprised bush fires totalling 218 in February, forest (150) and illegal waste burning (14).

The Meteorological Services Department had classified large swathes of Sabah, Sarawak and the peninsula as being susceptible to grasslands and bush fires due to the dry weather.

